PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Come on in... it's warm inside

the new fully automatic

Motorola CAR HEATER

POSITIVE HEAT SELECTOR, THERMOSTAT CONTROLLED
Fast, constant heat. Heats in a minute or less! Maintains pre-selected heat constantly.

ALL THE HEAT YOU WANT
So powerful it produces sufficient heat to keep an average size room comfortably WARM.

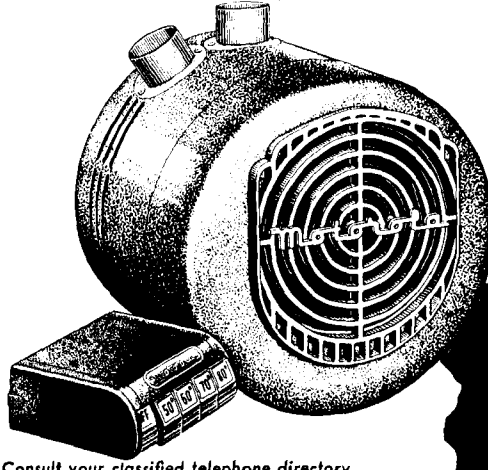
HEATS WHEN THE ENGINE IS OFF
Operates independently of engine and fuel pump. Does not affect idling of engine.

EASY TO INSTALL IN ALL CARS
Fits every make and model car—even those with automatic transmission.

TWO MODELS, FOR COWL-MOUNT AND UNDERSEAT INSTALLATION

Both models engineered for thorough air circulation. Both have efficient defroster-blower system.

BY THE MAKERS OF THE FAMOUS MOTOROLA CAR RADIOS

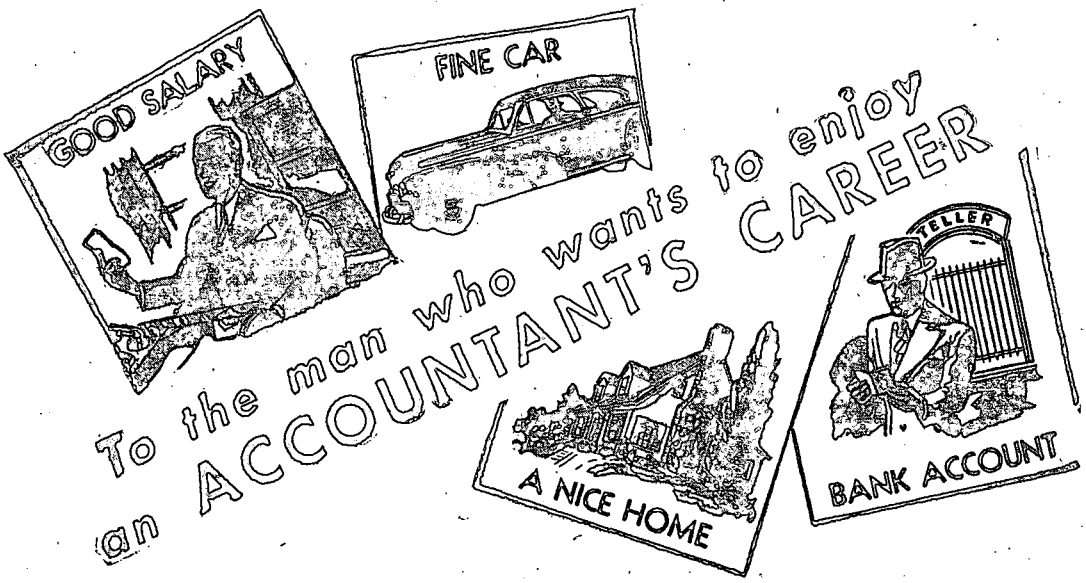


Consult your classified telephone directory for your nearest Motorola Radio dealer.

MOTOROLA, INC. • CHICAGO 51, ILL.

Motorola GASOLINE CAR HEATER

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



IF you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period in your life? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of $3,000 to $10,000?

An accountant's duties are interesting, varied and of real worth to his employers. He has *standing!*

Do you feel that such things aren't for you? Well, don't be too sure. Very possibly they *can* be!

Why not, like so many before you, investigate LaSalle's modern Problem Method of training for an accountancy position?

Just suppose you were permitted to work in a large accounting house under the personal supervision of an expert accountant. Suppose, with his aid, you studied accounting principles and solved problems day by day—easy ones at first—then the more difficult ones. If you could do this—and if you could turn to him for advice as the problems became complex—soon you'd master them all.

That's the training you follow in principle under the LaSalle Problem Method.

You cover accountancy from the basic Principles right up through Accountancy Systems and Income Tax Procedure. Then you add C. P. A. Training and prepare for the C. P. A. examinations.

As you go along, you absorb the principles of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Statistical Control, Organization, Management and Finance.

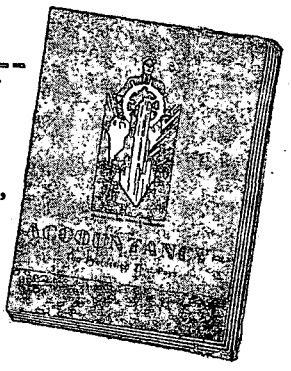
Your progress is as speedy as you care to make it—depending on your own eagerness to learn and the time you spend in study.

Will recognition come? The only answer, as you know, is that success *does* come to the man who is really *trained.* It's possible your employers will notice your improvement in a very few weeks or months. Indeed, many LaSalle graduates have paid for their training—with increased earnings—before they have completed it! For accountants, who are trained in organization and management, are the executives of the future.

Write For This Free Book

For your own good, don't put off investigation of *all* the facts. Write for our free 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays." It'll prove that accountancy offers brilliant futures to those who aren't afraid of serious home study. Send us the coupon *now.*

Over 2300 Certified Public Accountants among LaSalle alumni



LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

417 South Dearborn Street, Dept. 1329-H Chicago 5, Illinois

I want to be an accountant. Send me, without cost or obligation, the 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays," and full information about your accountancy training program.

*Name*_____

*Address*_____ *City*_____

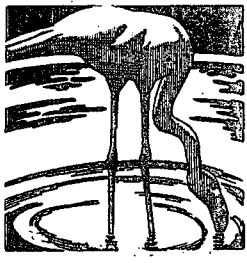
*Position*_____ *Age*_____

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STARTLING STORIES

Vol. 16, No. 3 A THRILLING PUBLICATION January, 1948

A Complete Novel



THE BLUE FLAMINGO

By HANNES BOK

The fugitives scaled the ruined staircase in search of a hideout from the law—and stumbled into an alien world where each man became the embodiment of his true self! 13

A Hall of Fame Novelet

THE CONQUEST OF TWO WORLDS.....Edmond Hamilton 70
Earthmen prove that mass murder can be prevented only through universal law backed up by force! A classic reprinted by popular demand

Short Stories

ALEPH SUB ONE.....Margaret St. Clair 62
Future housewife Oona all but wipes out the world with a question

ULTRA EVOLUTION.....Polton Cross 84
When the Earth's crust cools, what will become of mankind?

GUARANTEED.....E. Everett Evans 93
The Voice from the Future makes a protest!

Special Features

THE ETHER VIBRATES.....The Editor 6
A department for readers, including announcements and letters

SCIENCE FICTION FAN PUBLICATIONS.....A Review 109

Cover Painting by Earle Bergey—Illustrating "The Blue Flamingo"

STARTLING STORIES, published every other month by Better Publications, Inc., N. L. Pines, President, at 4600 Diversey Ave., Chicago 39, Ill. Editorial and executive offices, 10 East 40th St., New York 16, N. Y. Entered as second class matter November 22, 1946, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1947, by Better Publications, Inc. Subscription (12 issues), $1.80; single copies, $.15; foreign and Canadian postage extra. In corresponding with this magazine please include your postal zone number, if any. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes and are submitted at the author's risk. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of a living person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence.

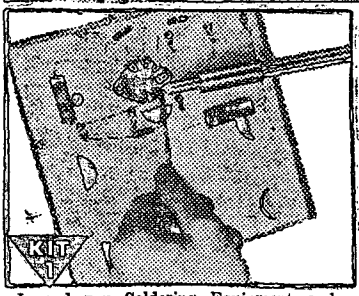
Companion magazines: Thrilling Wonder Stories, Popular Western, Detective Mystery Novel, Thrilling Western, Thrilling Love, Thrilling Detective, Rodeo Romances, The Phantom Detective, Sky Fighters, Popular Detective, Thrilling Ranch Stories, Thrilling Sports, Popular Sports Magazine, Range Riders Western, Texas Rangers, Everyday Astrology, G-Men Detective, Detective Novel Magazine, Black Book Detective, Popular Love, Masked Rider Western, Rio Kid Western, Exciting Western, West, Triple Detective, Mystery Book Magazine, Triple Western, Giant Western and Exciting Love.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

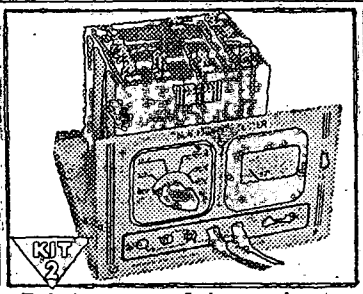
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I Will Show You How to Learn RADIO by Practicing in Spare Time

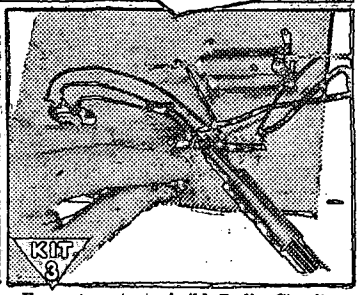
I Send You Big Kits of Radio Parts



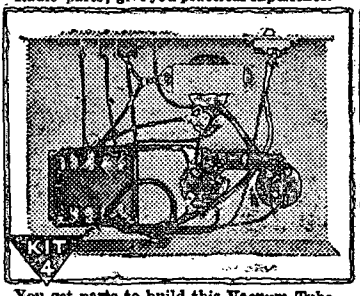
I send you Soldering Equipment and Radio Parts; show you how to do Radio soldering; how to mount and connect Radio parts; give you practical experience.



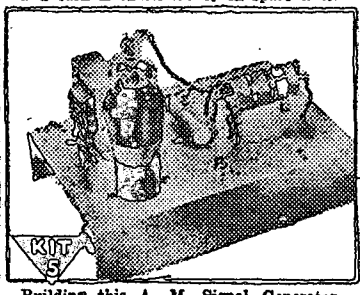
Early in my course I show you how to build this N.R.I. Tester with parts I send. It soon helps you fix neighborhood Radios and earn EXTRA money in spare time.



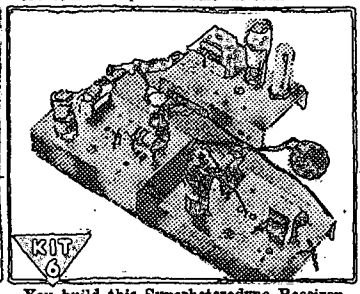
You get parts to build Radio Circuits; then test them; see how they work; learn how to design special circuits; how to locate and repair circuit defects.



You get parts to build this Vacuum Tube Power Pack; make changes which give you experience with packs of many kinds; learn to correct power pack troubles.



Building this A. M. Signal Generator gives you more valuable experience. It provides amplitude-modulated signals for many tests and experiments.



You build this Superheterodyne Receiver which brings in local and distant stations—and gives you more experience to help you win success in Radio.

KNOW RADIO—Win Success

I Will Train You at Home—SAMPLE LESSON FREE

APPROVED for training under G.I. BILL

Do you want a good-pay job in the fast-growing Radio Industry—or your own Radio Shop? Mail the Coupon for a Sample Lesson and my 64-page book, "How to Be a Success in RADIO—Television, Electronics," both FREE. See how I will train you at home—how you get practical Radio experience building, testing Radio circuits with BIG KITS OF PARTS I send!

Many Beginners Soon Make Extra Money in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll I start sending EXTRA MONEY manuals that show how to make EXTRA money fixing neighbor's Radios in spare time while still learning! It's probably easier to get started now than ever before, because the Radio Repair Business is booming. Trained Radio Technicians also find profitable opportunities in Police, Aviation, Marine Radio, Broadcasting, Radio Manufacturing, Public Address work. Think of even *greater* opportunities as Television, FM, and Electronic devices become available to the public! Send for FREE books now!

Find Out What NRI Can Do For You

Mail Coupon for Sample Lesson and my FREE 64-page book. Read the details about my Course; letters from men I trained; see how quickly, easily you can get started. No obligation! Just MAIL COUPON NOW in envelope or paste on penny postal. **J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 8A09, National Radio Institute, *Pioneer Home Study Radio School*, Washington 9, D. C.**

My training includes TELEVISION • ELECTRONICS • F M

VETERANS

You can get this training right in your own home under G. I. Bill. Mail coupon for full details.

Good for Both—FREE

Mr. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 8A09, National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.

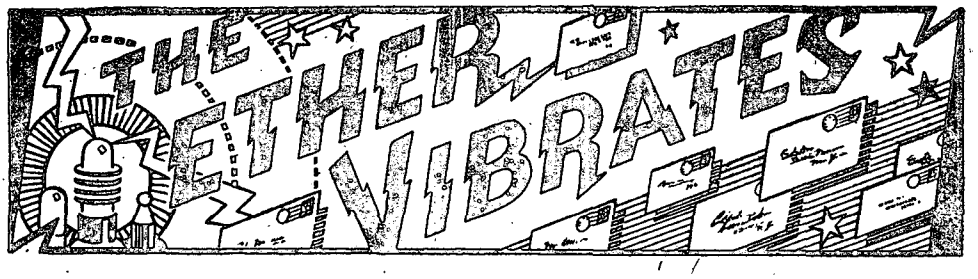
Mail me FREE, your sample lesson and 64-page book. (No salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City.....Zone....State.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



THE current growth of science fiction in literary stature as well as in reader public has not unnaturally caused considerable puzzlement among its more thoughtful devotees as to just what its true definition may be. Opinions are sharply divided and run all the way from those who insist it is merely a suppositional embroidery upon existing scientific theory to those who lump in the category everything from Pi to the supernatural.

At either extremity, and at all the way stations between them, the argument is currently hot. So far no divorces have been registered with such disagreements as their grounds and no murders have been committed, but all too often feeling runs high. Apparently, science fiction is where you find it as you like it and everyone who doesn't agree with you is wrong.

Now Franklin Kerkhof of 1705 Q Street, N. W., Washington 9, D. C., has written us a highly provocative letter on this engrossing subject which we believe worthy of attention beyond that generally accorded such screed in this department. Herewith, Mr. Kerkhof:

Let's see if we can get this thing a little straighter. Since my last letter I have been reading Korzybski's *Science and Sanity*. Possibly non-Aristotelianism will help us to understand one another better, if I know how to apply it.

We seem to have gotten down to the fundamental question of what science fiction "is" and "is not." I am afraid it is futile to argue about this. Some will say that stf includes all fantasy stories in which science plays a part, however small, while others will say that science must play a fundamental part for a story to be called science fiction.

No matter how you define it, the field covers many different types. The relative merit of each type is mainly decided by the individual reader. The reader wants to be entertained primarily. If he can be taught something at the same time, so much the better.

I do not believe I would like to read a theorem or an equation fictionalized, even if it could be done. A mere example of how a scientific principle would work might be termed fiction but would be out of place in STARTLING STORIES. However, if we add to this its effect upon a group of people, a certain amount of action, etc., we do have science fiction of a type which I usually like very much. And if this is done correctly, it does require writing ability.

However, this is not the only type I like. I like all types to a certain extent. I also like "straight" fantasy at times, but for a different reason. It appeals to me most when it inspires a *genuine* sense of beauty or, in some cases, horror etc. We all like to escape from reality at times and modern science fiction does not always allow this.

Some fantasy stories include a bit of pseudo science which would probably be better left out. For instance, in LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE, which started all this, the city was supposed to move through space but to stand still in time. I may be quite wrong, but this appears to be semantically meaningless to me. The universe just does not work like that. The same phenomenon could probably have been explained in another way and the story would have been a little more satisfactory at least to me.

To take up the last paragraph first—it seems to us that intelligent man of the pre-Gallilean or pre-Copernican eras might have argued just as firmly for the flatness of the Earth or its central position in the universe.

When one considers that what we term stationary is only fixed in a relative sense—that if it is an Earthly object it is spinning round and round on a globe revolving in turn about the Sun, which in turn revolves about heaven only knows what, which in turn . . . but that's enough.

Furthermore, since so little is actually known of the properties of time, it did not seem to us that the author's explanation of the curious existence in LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE was over-farfetched—not at any rate in a pseudo-scientific sense. That again, however, is a matter of opinion.

Personally, we feel that a fantasy included in either this magazine or its companion, THRILLING WONDER STORIES, should have at least a semblance of comprehensibility regardless of its other qualities. Occasionally, of course, we break this rule—as in the memorable CALL HIM DEMON in TWS—but no editorial policy should be absolutely binding and rigid.

Granted, the fictionalization of a scientific principle or the application thereof makes for fine pseudo science. But so, equally, does the same development of a principle of philosophy or even theology, since both departments of learning in their highest form abut similar forms of so-called "pure" science.

Pinning a semantic label on science fiction is about as thankless a task as that of the man in the John Kendricks Bangs fable who had a whale in a tank and kept trying to put a tag on him saying how much he weighed (the whale, that is) and where he came from —the whale kept sloshing around in the tank and knocking the tag off.

At any rate science fiction is a lot more

(Continued on page 8)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THOUSANDS NOW PLAY

who never thought they could!

Thrilled by Playing

I've had my lessons just a week. I think your course is super. I was more thrilled than words can express when I found I could actually play America, The Merry Widow Waltz and the others.
*J. T., Mancelona, Mich.

Wouldn't Take $1000 for Course

The lessons are so simple that anyone can understand them. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for my course. *S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.

Shares Course With Sister

The teaching is so interesting and the pieces so beautiful I couldn't ask for anything better. I recommend your course highly. My sister shares it with me and feels the same way.
*D. E. G., Wausau, Wisc.

Finding New Joy

I am finding a new joy that I never experienced before, for I have always wanted to play, but had given up hope until I heard of your course.
*C. S. Lucien, Okla.

Plays After 2 Months

I hesitated before sending for your course because of an earlier experience I had with a course by ear from another company. I am playing pieces now I never dreamed I would play after only two months.
*E. T., Prichard, Ala.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.

You, too, can play any instrument By this EASY A-B-C Method

YOU think it's difficult to learn music? That's what thousands of others have thought! Just like you, they long to play some instrument—the piano, violin, guitar, saxophone or other favorites. But they denied themselves the pleasure—because they thought it took months and years of tedious study to learn.

Learn in Spare Time at Home

And then they made an amazing discovery! They learned about a wonderful way to learn music at home—without a private teacher—without tedious study—and in a surprisingly short time. They wrote to the U. S. School of Music for the facts about this remarkable short-cut method. And the facts opened their eyes! They were amazed to find how easy it was to learn.

The result? Over 850,000 men and women have studied music at home this simple, A-B-C way. Now, all over the world, enthusiastic music-lovers are enjoying the thrilling satisfaction of creating their own music. They have found the key to good times, popularity and profit.

Costs only few cents a Day

And that's what you can do, right now. Get the proof that you, too, can learn to play your favorite instrument—quickly, easily, in spare time at home for only a few cents a day. Never mind if you have no musical knowledge or talent. Just read the fascinating booklet and Print and Picture sample that explain all about the U. S. School method. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) Tear out the coupon now, before you turn the page. U. S. School of Music, 2941 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y. (50th year)

NOTICE
Please don't confuse our method with any systems claiming to teach "without music" or "by ear". We teach you easily and quickly to play real music, any music, by standard notes . . . not by any trick or number system.

FREE!
Print and Picture Sample

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
2941 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet "How to Learn Music at Home," and your free Print and Picture Sample.

Piano	Saxophone	Clarinet	Practical Finger Control
Guitar	Trumpet, Cornet	Trombone	
Hawaiian Guitar	Reed Organ	Flute	Piccolo
Violin	Tenor Banjo	Modern Elementary Harmony	Mandolin
Piano Accordion	Ukulele		

Have you Instrument?.....

Name.....
(Please print)

Address.....

City.....State.....

NOTE: If you are under 16 years of age, parent must sign coupon.

SAVE 2c—STICK COUPON ON PENNY POSTCARD

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CUT DOWN NICOTINE!
MEDICO
FILTERED
SMOKING
MAKE THE 1-PACK TEST
START WITH A FRESH FILTER
Smoke just one pack of cigarettes—then look at the filter.
HOLDER
$1
with box of ten filters
YOUR EYES CAN SEE THAT
Medico-filtered smoking cuts down nicotine and irritating tars. For full benefits, replace filter when discolored. Makes your favorite cigarette taste better.
Only these patented filters have the 66 baffles that whirl the smoke cleaner and cooler into your mouth. For pipes, cigarette and cigar holders.
S. M. FRANK & CO., INC., NEW YORK 22

LAW

STUDY AT HOME Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before. More Ability: More Prestige: More Money We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send NOW.
LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn Street
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 1329-L Chicago 5, Ill.

INVENTORS

Learn how to protect your invention. Secure "Patent Guide" together with "Record of Invention" form—without obligation.
CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN & HARVEY JACOBSON
Registered Patent Attorneys
88-A District National Bldg. Washington 5, D. C.

THE ETHER VIBRATES

(Continued from page 6)

mobile and fluid than the whale's corollary—the iron dog in the side yard of the man who wanted to give his little daughter music lessons but couldn't afford them that year. The dog, you may remember, couldn't wag his tail any more than the man could tag his whale.

Once more we feel that the most important single element in a successful tale of science fiction is—MAGIC! Everything else must contribute to this one end.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

THE redoubtable Wesley Long takes over the featured novel spot in the forthcoming issue of STARTLING STORIES with a tale of multiple probabilities developing into conflicting realities, entitled ONE OF THREE.

This is a story of the post-atomic world of a few years hence, a world little different from our own until the radio experiments of a young scientist bring him in communication with a young lady who apparently lives in the house across the street.

Interested, he calls on her to find no such person has ever existed despite the fact he can exchange messages with her in his laboratory. Only when actual transference has been effected does he learn that she lives on another world existing coaxially with our own—a world born at the moment of the first atom-bomb explosion at Alamogordo, one in which the atomic fire has never been put out.

In desperation its citizens, having learned that the original Earth still exists, are seeking to return and take it over, leaving their dying globe to its fate. Seeking a solution to this appalling problem, our scientist then learns of a third and still more sinister world, born at the same moment, in which the bomb never went off and atomic power has been put to full every-day use.

It is this third world which, sensing that soon two of the phantom globes born in July, 1945, must die as all three Earths revert to a single entity in space-time, is pulling the strings behind the conflict of the other two, planning only to save itself.

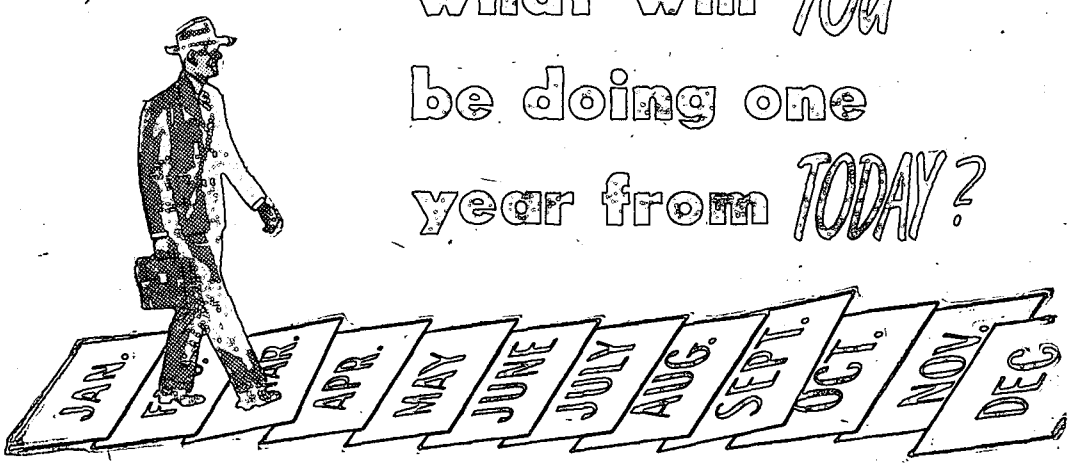
With only a handful of people aware of what is happening, the fate of three worlds is decided in one of the most engrossing and exciting and scientifically intriguing novels SS has ever published. ONE OF THREE is one of the best.

The late Stanley Weinbaum again has the Hall of Fame to himself with one of his most famous short stories, THE BRINK OF IN-

(Continued on page 10)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what will YOU be doing one year from TODAY?



YOU'RE too smart to stay in the same old job rut! You know that you have one life — that's all. So you've thought about *doing* something that would advance you in your work, increase your income.

The time to get started is *now*. And you can take the first step toward Personal Success this very minute! Just look over the coupon below and mark the I. C. S. Course in your field of interest. Then mail it — *today!*

We'll send you complete information on the International Correspondence Schools, and how they can give you the training you need to get ahead faster. Cost is low, texts are easy to understand, and every student gets *personal* service. The time to "take steps" is RIGHT NOW!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS ICS

BOX 3969-K, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the course BEFORE which I have marked X:

Business and Academic Courses
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Arithmetic
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business Administration
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Certified Public Accounting
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Commercial Art
- ☐ Cost Accounting
- ☐ Federal Tax
- ☐ First Year College
- ☐ Foremanship
- ☐ French
- ☐ Good English
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Higher Mathematics
- ☐ Motor Traffic
- ☐ Postal Service
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Secretarial
- ☐ Sign Lettering
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Stenography
- ☐ Traffic Management

Air Conditioning and Plumbing Courses
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Heating
- ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Refrigeration
- ☐ Steam Fitting

Chemistry Courses
- ☐ Chemical Engineering
- ☐ Chemistry, Analytical
- ☐ Chemistry, Industrial
- ☐ Chemistry, Mfg. Iron & Steel
- ☐ Petroleum Refining
- ☐ Plastics
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making

Civil Engineering, Architectural and Mining Courses
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Building Estimating
- ☐ Civil Engineering
- ☐ Coal Mining
- ☐ Contracting and Building
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ Lumber Dealer
- ☐ Reading Structural Blueprints
- ☐ Sanitary Engineering
- ☐ Structural Drafting
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping

Communications Courses
- ☐ Electronics
- ☐ Practical Telephony
- ☐ Radio, General
- ☐ Radio Operating
- ☐ Radio Servicing
- ☐ Telegraph Engineering

Electrical Courses
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electric Light and Power
- ☐ Lighting Technician
- ☐ Practical Electrician
- ☐ Power House Electric
- ☐ Ship Electrician

Internal Combustion Engines Courses
- ☐ Auto Technician
- ☐ Aviation
- ☐ Diesel-Electric
- ☐ Diesel Engines
- ☐ Gas Engines

Mechanical Courses
- ☐ Aeronautical Engineer's, Jr.
- ☐ Aircraft Drafting
- ☐ Flight Engineer
- ☐ Forging
- ☐ Foundry Work
- ☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
- ☐ Industrial Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Metallurgy
- ☐ Machine Shop
- ☐ Machine Shop Inspection
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Mold-Loft Work
- ☐ Patternmaking—Wood, Metal
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Drafting
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Worker
- ☐ Ship Drafting
- ☐ Ship Fitting
- ☐ Tool Designing
- ☐ Toolmaking
- ☐ Welding—Gas and Electric

Railroad Courses
- ☐ Air Brake
- ☐ Car Inspector
- ☐ Diesel Locomotive
- ☐ Locomotive Engineer
- ☐ Locomotive Fireman
- ☐ Railroad Section Foreman

Steam Engineering Courses
- ☐ Boilermaking
- ☐ Combustion Engineering
- ☐ Engine Running
- ☐ Marine Engineering
- ☐ Steam Electric
- ☐ Steam Engines

Textile Courses
- ☐ Cotton Manufacturing
- ☐ Rayon Weaving
- ☐ Textile Designing
- ☐ Woolen Manufacturing

Name_____ Home Address _____

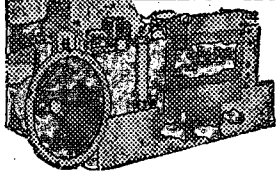
City_____ State_____

Age_____ Present Position_____ Working Hours_____ A.M. to_____ P.M.

Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces.
Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GET INTO RADIO TELEVISION ELECTRONICS NOW!

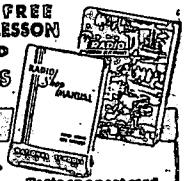


INTERESTING JOBS — GOOD PAY — EARN WHILE YOU LEARN — A BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN, are just a few of the opportunities awaiting you as a Trained National Radio, Television and Electronic Expert. Broadcasting, Radio Service, and other specialized phases are constantly demanding more and more trained men. Get all the facts about this GREAT FIELD. ACT AT ONCE!

SHOP METHOD HOME TRAINING
By a Real Established Resident Trade School
With Classrooms, FM Studios, Shops and Laboratories

gives you the knowledge, skill, and experience that assure definite progress — step-by-step for a brighter, more prosperous future. You Learn by Doing. Build a standard LONG DISTANCE SUPERHETERODYNE RECEIVER as shown above, an audio oscillator, a signal generator (low powered Radio transmitter) and many other units and experiments with equipment furnished you in your home. National Graduates everywhere have qualified, through spare time study for well-paying jobs, success and security in Radio. It is a field with a proved future. Find out what this industry offers National Trained Service Engineers, Operators and Technicians. Take the first step to greater success NOW by sending coupon below—TODAY! G.I. APPROVED

FREE LESSON



NATIONAL SCHOOLS
LOS ANGELES 37, CALIFORNIA

MAIL COUPON

National Schools, Dept. TG-2
4000 S. Figueroa Los Angeles 37, Calif.

Mail me sample lesson and book FREE. Fasten on a postcard

NAME.....AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....ZONE.....STATE.....

☐ Check here if Veteran of World War II

Get into Good Paying AUTO BODY and FENDER WORK

BIG DEMAND in Auto Body and Fender work. Start training now in your spare time at home for good pay work. Practical shop experience included. U.E.I. Training covers metal work, welding, painting, etc. Placement service—or we will show you how to start your own shop. Behind U.E.I. TRAINING is a large national organization founded 1927. Write today for FREE FACTS—No obligation.

Approved for Training under G.I. Bill

AUTO-CRAFTS DIVISION ○ UTILITIES ENGINEERING INSTITUTE
2523 Sheffield Avenue, Dept. X-7AF, Chicago 14, Illinois

High School Course at Home Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-159, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

Learn to MOUNT BIRDS

Tan SKINS, make up FURS

Be a Taxidermist. *Double your hunting fun.* We teach you at Home. Mount Birds, Animals, Fish, Heads, common specimens. Fun and profits. Decorate home and den. MAKE MONEY. Mount game, fish for others. Big profits in spare time. WRITE TODAY.

100 game pictures in FREE BOOK

Hunters, get your copy. It's Now Free. Send post card. State your AGE.

FREE BOOK

NORTHWESTERN SCHOOL OF TAXIDERMY
Dept. 6878 Omaha, Nebraska

THE ETHER VIBRATES

(Continued from page 8)

FINITY. The narrator is Professor Aarons, a noted mathematician, and his predicament is one guaranteed to perplex sorely all but the most fanatical of horse player system dopers and those unsung wizards who seek to beat the percentages of roulette.

Imprisoned by a madman, his release depends upon his discovering and solving a mathematical problem his captor is thinking about—and refuses to discuss. This is a problem story in the truest sense of the word—and one whose ingenuity gives it full claim on Hall of Fame status.

As always, there will be short stories by some of the best-known names in science fiction. Also, your Editor in his capacities as letter-from-readers catchall and stern-visaged critic of amateur stf publications. It promises to be quite an ish.

ETHERGRAMS

WE THOUGHT we had seen just about everything in the course of reader missives at one time or another in our fell career of answering same, but one Joe Kirschnik of 4018 Colborne Road, Baltimore 29, Maryland (not unknown to these columns) has sent us one of those accordion-pleated folders of rawly colored postcards from Panama City, Florida, gaudily advising us anent the vacation wonders of that fabulous state. He says, to wit:

> Oh, how I miss you! It seems they just don't sell SS or TWS down here. My life is worthless without you! Absolutely worthless!!

Thanks, Joe, we didn't know you cared. Our circulation department is currently looking into distribution down there. And thanks for the postcards.

Opening gun in the regular letter salvo is fired by a new (to us at any rate) author, who seems to have a certain lingering knowledge of what he wishes to say. So. . . .

OUTSTANDING SERVICE!

by W. L. Haynes

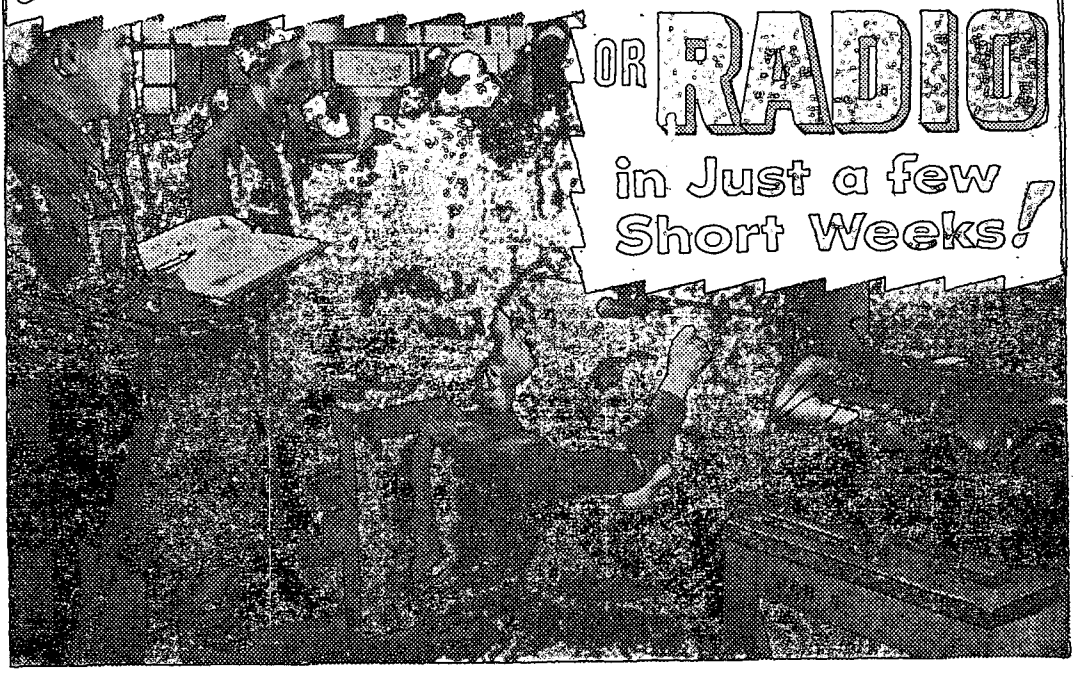
Greetings: I am by no means a stranger to STARTLING STORIES, but have been out of touch for the past few months. It is gratifying to note that SS is holding its own. The September issue proves that.

Top honors, I think, go to Weinbaum's "The Circle of Zero," which is truly a classic; superior fantasy. "Lord of the Storm," by Keith Hammond, is right up there, but I can't for the life of me give it better than Excellent. The characterization was super, the plot

(Continued on page 94)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LEARN EITHER **ELECTRICITY** OR **RADIO**



in Just a few Short Weeks!

Get Training *NOW* in the **GREAT SHOPS of COYNE**

YOUR CHOICE OF 2 BIG FIELDS!

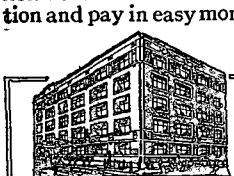
Why spend years learning Electricity or Radio? Come to the Great Shops of COYNE in Chicago—the Electrical and Radio Center of the World. Whether you've had some experience, or none at all, COYNE prepares you for good jobs in a few short weeks. Get the facts! Mail coupon today.

NOT "HOME-STUDY" COURSES!

All Coyne training is given here in our own big shops. **We do not teach by mail.** You work on actual full-size equipment, just like you'll use on the job. Almost before you realize it, you're a Coyne Graduate—ready for big opportunities!

VETERANS! Coyne is authorized to accept veterans for G.I. training. Coupon brings bulletin.

NON-VETERANS who are short of cash can finance their tuition and pay in easy monthly payments after graduation.



Famous for Nearly 50 Years

B. W. COOKE, President

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 18-84K, Chicago 12, Ill.

FREE BOOK on RADIO or ELECTRICITY

Whether you prefer Radio or Electricity, send now for big new FREE BOOK on the field of your choice. Dozens of pictures, facts about Coyne Training. No obligation. No salesman will call. Rush coupon now!

B. W. Cooke

MAIL NOW

B. W. COOKE, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 18-84K, Chicago 12, Ill.

Send me your BIG FREE BOOK for the Course checked below, and your special plans to help me. This does not obligate me and no salesman will call.

☐ ELECTRICITY ☐ RADIO

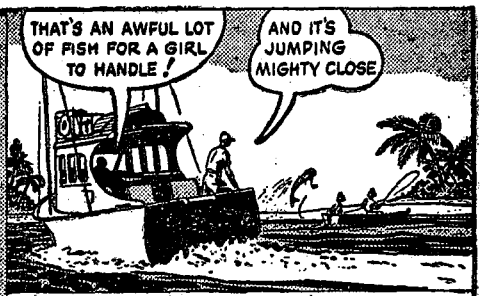
NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

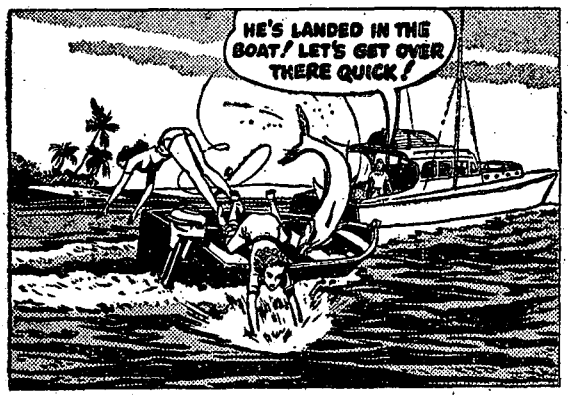
CITY.....STATE.....

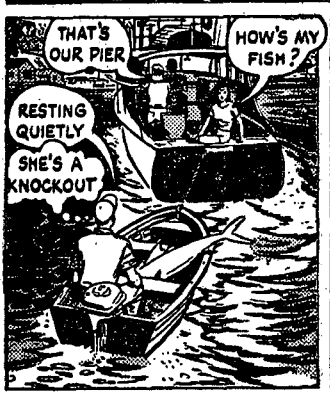
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LEAPING TARPON STARTS THINGS MOVING



JERRY CANNON AND HIS BROTHER KIP ARE RETURNING TO PORT FROM A LONG DAY OF TROLLING FOR SAILFISH IN THE GULF STREAM. WHEN . . .





PICTURES? TAKE KIP HERE, BUT LEAVE ME OUT. I LOOK LIKE "BLACKBEARD THE PIRATE"
WHY NOT. CLEAN UP IN THE CLUBHOUSE WHILE I GET MY CAMERA

SAY, THIS BLADES A HONEY! I'VE NEVER ENJOYED A QUICKER, SMOOTHER SHAVE
LOTS OF OUR MEMBERS USE THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE REALLY KEEN

MEN, THIN GILLETTES HAND OUT SHAVES THAT ARE CLEAN, COMFORTABLE AND GOOD-LOOKING. AMONG ALL LOW-PRICED BLADES, THEY'RE THE KEENEST AND LONGEST LASTING. THIN GILLETTES ARE MADE TO FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY, TOO. THAT MEANS YOU ARE PROTECTED AGAINST SCRAPING AND IRRITATION. ALWAYS ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES
THIN
Gillette
BLADES
4 for 10¢

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We must leave this spot at once," Mareth said. "Time later to free our hands" (CHAPTER XVI)

The Blue Flamingo

By HANNES BOK

The fugitives scaled the ruined staircase in search of a hideout from the law—and stumbled into an alien world where each man became the embodiment of his true self!

CHAPTER I

The Flamingo

THE canoe cut the black swamp water without a sound. Carlotta, her biceps bulging like a man's, plied the stern paddle—for she alone knew the waterways of the tangled Everglades. In the bow the gigantic and glowering Scarlatti threw his weight on the fore paddle, cursing the hyacinth roots that clutched it, damning the vines that swung from above into his face.

For the hundredth time he scowled back over his shoulder at the swarthy unkempt woman.

AN ASTONISHING COMPLETE NOVEL

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Carlotta—you sure we're headed right?"

Burks, at ease in the middle, asked tonelessly, "Why keep asking? If she's not sure what good will it do?"

Carlotta, stung, snapped, "If you think you can do better—go ahead and try!"

The brief argument subsided into mutterings. Hibbert, the unwanted one, held his tongue. It mattered least to him where they were going or when they got there. His life was forfeit anyway to Scarlatti's sadistic humor.

He would never willingly have sought Scarlatti's company. They had met in jail, a place Hibbert had never expected to be. The three—Scarlatti, Burks and Carlotta—were criminals. Hibbert was of that other world of people who worked for a living and who nourished the illusion they were part of a decent world instead of a jungle.

But business associates had duped Hibbert, as company treasurer, into signing some blank checks which had then been cashed in strange ways. Hibbert, whose name was on them, had been convicted of embezzlement and promptly railroaded to prison. Scarlatti was his cellmate.

Frank Scarlatti was a small giant rather than a big man. He was bearishly handsome and subject to a sense of frustration that led him to curious actions. He insisted upon bringing Hibbert along when Burks sprang them from the prison van taking them to another jail—not because of any love for Hibbert, but because it occurred to him that he would have supreme power of life and death over another human and it pleased his vanity suddenly to play God.

Hibbert found himself a prisoner. Burks' blazing guns had cut down two guards in the escape and Hibbert was now quite thoroughly implicated in murder as well as escape and the original charge.

They sought out Carlotta, Scarlatti's woman. She knew the Everglades from the old days of liquor running. The plan was for Carlotta to guide them across the swamps to the Gulf Coast where they could lose themselves among the fishing folk.

Burks was annoyed by Scarlatti's dragging along of Hibbert, but chose not to let it cause open conflict.

"Play God if you like," he told the giant, "but remember—where there's God—there's Satan!"

His voice was expressionless. Physically he was a masterpiece of economy, small-boned, long-limbed, taut-skinned, built for speed. But his face, for all its classic perfection, was as repellent to Hibbert as Scarlatti's, for his expression was entirely without emotion. He seemed more machine than human. Hibbert wondered what had made him thus.

As for Carlotta, Hibbert found her far from glamorous. She was tall and would have seemed gaunt and angular were it not for her heavy muscles, like those of a channel swimmer. She was swarthy, unkempt. Obviously she was mad about Scarlatti. Her eyes clung to him, the yearning in them as strangely tender in her rugged face as flowers springing from bald granite. She was a little older than Scarlatti, who was thirty. Burks in his perfection was ageless.

CARLOTTA resented Hibbert. One of his legs had been broken in a childhood accident and carelessly set. He limped as a result. She used this as an excuse to taunt him. Scarlatti, as God, defended him. Furiously Carlotta spat in Hibbert's face and drew a beating from Scarlatti.

Thereafter, as they cut through the swampland in Carlotta's canoe, she was moodily silent. Hibbert distrusted her. And he saw that Burks, despite his seeming defense of her against Scarlatti's nagging, had his own measure of doubt.

On the third day of their flight, the sky was filled with hum and roar—a Border Patrol plane bumbled overhead. Was it merely a routine maneuver—or search for fugitives? They were drifting downstream through a willow tunnel, the limp branches hanging dejectedly down to the water in disappointed Narcissism. They were not seen.

And on the fifth day they blundered upon the stairway.

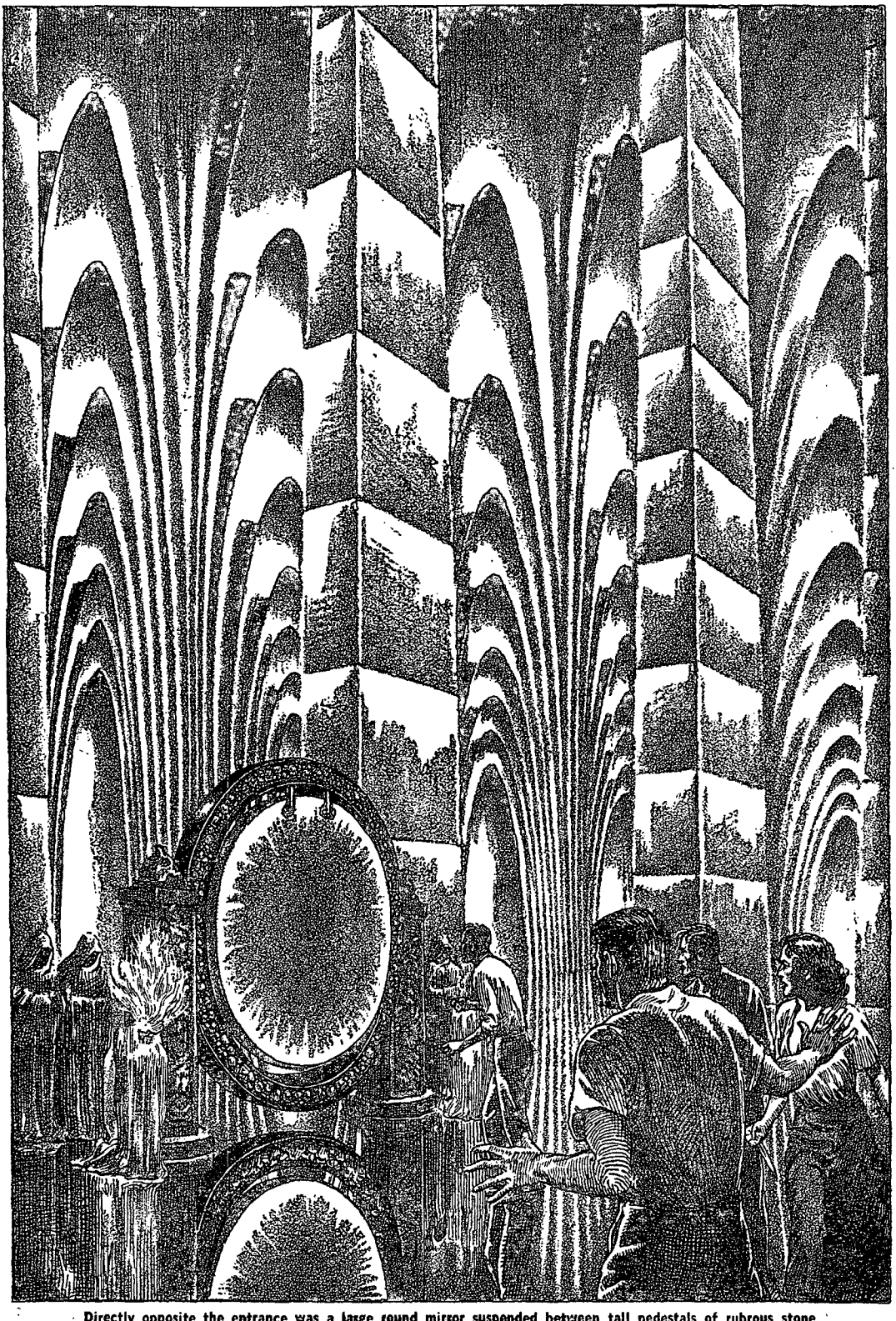
* * * * *

It was midday, uncomfortably hot as the nights were cold. The canoe was leaking from several scratches and they made to shore for repairs. Hardly had they cut through rushes and flags, touched muddy landing, when Carlotta raised a warning hand—her head tipped, listening.

From down the black channel of water, around a bend, came a throaty rumble like a lion's purr—the throb of an outboard motor. Scarlatti's thick fingers gripped the shank of his paddle. He croaked, "Patrol boat?"

Carlotta shrugged. Burks crouched low in the canoe. Scarlatti and the woman followed his example. He pulled Hibbert down.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Directly opposite the entrance was a large round mirror suspended between tall pedestals of rubrous stone
(CHAPTER VII)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The throbbing swelled as it swung around the turn, heading directly toward them. They could hear voices but not distinguish any words. Calm voices, and casual—their makers had not seen the canoe.

With a screan which made every one of the canoe's occupants start, an ibis launched out of the reeds. Carlotta lifted her head, carefully parted the screen of rush and flag, peeped beyond.

The throbbing softened, died away upstream. None moved, despite the maddening attentions of the deer flies. Then Burks released Hibbert, took his hand from his mouth.

"Was it a patrol boat?" Scarlatti asked.

"Nah—must of been hunters lookin' for painters." At Burks' questioning glance, "Tha's what they call panthers in these here parts."

Scarlatti's eyes were lifted to the treetops; he made them into slits because of what he saw there.

"A buildin'! We got to lam out of here quick!"

Carlotta pushed aside his ready weapon. "No sense gettin' cold feet an' trigger happy. Like enough, it's one of them Spic ruins datin' 'way back—you find 'em all over the Glades. "Spics," she translated for Hibbert, "is Spanish people."

Burks said: "It's a high place and dry. We could get a good look from there and I think we'd better. Let's drag the canoe into the trees."

They wedged through mangrove barricades, through the ranks of armies of fern giants, to the foot of the stair. Carlotta, the Baedeker of the Everglades, spoke.

"See the bougainvillea, them orange an' grapefruit trees? They don't grow wild, though they're plenty wild now. They had to of been planted—maybe years an' years ago—by them old Spic settlers what built the steps."

She gazed at the stair soaring steeply between banks of flowers as if, like Babel's tower, its makers intended it to pierce the sky.

"It's coral rock an' weathered," she said. "Looks like it was made a million years ago!"

Without break, marbled by splotches of orange and grey-green lichen, it shot to the very tops of the tall palmettos, its clean lines so brutally conflicting with the graceful disorder of the flower-tiers as to suggest dynamic purpose. Venomously green moss cushioned its steps, and twisted ropes of lianas portcullised it like curtains of woven black snakes.

IT WAS only a forgotten flight of steps, yet from it pulsed a black aura of premonition. Had Hibbert any choice, he would have turned from it. But Scarlatti was unaware of any threat.

He said, "Let's lamp where it leads."

At the summit he halted, hands splayed in surprise. The others ranged themselves beside him.

They saw—first of all—a pool.

The steps ended at a platform thirty feet square. Its center was hollowed into a shallow basin twenty feet in diameter, rimmed by a low lip of translucent milky stone like Soochow jade. The pool was paved with this stone, the border an outcropping of it.

The water was incredibly blue and coated with a metallic sheen. Not a ripple marred its surface. It might have been brilliant glass of cobalt dusted with atoms of amethyst.

In its center, one webbed foot lifted, stood a blue flamingo. Its hue was not so deep nor rich as the water. It was the weaker blue of the sky and streaked with flaming opalescence.

It did not move. It watched them from an eye of gold and amber. It seemed like a statue molded from azure and lacquered with the fugitive tints of the rainbow.

Yet it lived—for the breeze riffled its feathers. It watched them warily, but with no suggestion of fear nor enmity. It seemed to be appraising them, judging them! The feeling was an uncomfortable one.

Carlotta spoke, a bit breathlessly. "I seen albino flamingoes, but a blue one . . . it's like a cat with horns an' a fish's tail besides!"

"Well, if two-headed calves get theirselves born now an' then—an' frogs with one head an' two bodies—I guess anythin's possible," Scarlatti said staunchly.

"It's white," Carlotta decided, extraordinarily discomfited. "Albino. The blue's reflected from the water." The explanation, however untrue, seemed slightly to relieve her.

She looked beyond the pool, over the parapet's brink. A sawgrass swamp stretched mile on mile to distance-hazed lines of palmettos. There was no further indication of ruins, no tumbled blocks nor verdure-covered mounds. It was as though the stair had

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been constructed solely to lead to the pool.

Carlotta's determination on a normal outlook revealed the depths of her fear. She remarked, oddly defiant, "The water looks bluer than it really is 'cause most of the swamp water's black. It's got to be brackish 'cause flamingoes don't feed 'ceptin' in salt water."

She walked to the water, stooped, dipped up a handful and spilled it—distrustfully, as if expecting the stain of ink. There was none. She raised wet hand to mouth as though to taste the drops on it.

With a ringing cry the blue bird flapped its wings. Carlotta remained crouching, staring at the bird—and it craned its long serpentine neck, staring back. For a very long moment they were locked in that mutual gaze. An uncanny moment, for it seemed to Hibbert that some message flashed between the two.

Then the bird turned its head from the woman and coiled its long neck over its back as if preparing to sleep.

AND Carlotta drew erect, her face pallid. Her lips moved but no sound came from them. With unnecessary care she wiped her wet hand on her skirt. Her eyes avoided the men, roved desperately here and there as if seeking a signpost pointing to topics suitable for cheering discussion.

"You know," she said, "I got chummy once with a Seminole gal from these parts. We was splittin' a bottle of Scotch an' after a while she loosened up an' told me a story—a lot of hogwash about how, long time ago, an explorer named Lion or somethin' like that was rangin' through this neck of the woods lookin' for a Fountain of Youth."

"Ponce de Leon," Hibbert murmured, their feud forgotten for the moment.

"That might of been the name," she agreed. Her acceptance of a state of truce worried rather than relieved him.

"This here Lion, or"—she sent a smile of appreciation to Hibbert—"or Ponce de Leon, him an' his mob tracked all over, bathin' in one mudhole after the other—but he never got no younger!

"She said—this here Seminole ga'. I'm tellin' you about—she said the Pool of Youth is out here in the Everglades all right, just the same. An' whoever finds it will know it's the twenty-four karat stuff 'cause it's guarded by a flamingo a thousan' years old. Get that—a thousan' years old! But she didn't say it was any color 'ceptin' natural —pink, like all flamingoes."

Again she scanned the hand she had dried. It was shaking. She hid it behind her, observed flatly, "Oh, well—I told you she was stewed."

A curious questioning note crept into her voice.

"This here gal told me her people know all about the pool, but keep away from it—'cause sometimes it don't make you young. It makes you—old! So old you just rot right in a minute an' fall down in pieces! An' that ain't all she told me. It does worse yet! Makes you blind—an' crippled—or changes you to animals!" And, anti-climactically: "I don't think this is it."

A lie, certainly, as Hibbert could discern from the anxiety with which she awaited their confirmation of that last spurious statement. None spoke—all eyes were on the pool and the cryptic bird in its center.

"She could spout a bit of Spanish or Indian, an' she said flamingo means like a flame," Carlotta said. "So I always kind of had the notion maybe she meant the Pool of Youth was a hot spring or a volcano. An' then there was the bird's name—Athoole, or somethin' like that."

"*Azul,*" Hibbert corrected. "In Spanish, it would be *el flamingo azul.* Translated, it means—the blue flamingo."

"You mean then that she wasn't kiddin'—an' this is the place?" Her voice turned husky at this confirmation of her fears. She strove to laugh but there was little of levity in her tone. "Ah, g' on—you're slingin' the steer!"

Burks whistled. "Fountain of Youth, hey? I could stand being twenty years younger!" He bent, fumbled with his shoelaces.

CHAPTER II

The Golden Stair

HE SAID, "I'm the scientific type, Carlotta. I'm not going in all at once! Just to wade, that's all. About five years ago, I cut my foot"—he slipped off shoe and sock, exhibited a white scar on his instep. "If this disappears the water's okay—and I'll dunk the rest of myself. If not no harm will have been done."

He bared his other foot, rolled his trouser-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

legs to his knees.

"Ah, you're nuts!" Scarlatti burst out.

"Maybe and maybe not," Burks retorted. "If that's a blue flamingo in front of us, contrary to nature—why shouldn't this water be contrary too?"

He stepped over the milky rim, set a foot on the pool's paving, looked down on blue-tinted toes and wiggled them.

"It's cold," he announced, "but it feels just like all other water." He lifted his foot and inspected it. "Nothing's happened as yet. Maybe you have to soak for quite a while before getting results."

He put his foot back in the water, sending ripples spreading. They lapped the flamingo's slender legs; it uncoiled its long neck, contemplated him. Then, with a metallic cry of rage, it beat its pinions and raced splashing toward him! He swore, automatically snatched his gun and fired—though Carlotta shrieked urgent protest and Hibbert threw out a hand to stay him.

The flamingo was flung back as though snatched by a tremendous and invisible claw. From its breast a crooked line of garnet-red rilled and dripped, splattering into the pool.

The bird curved its neck, peered down at its wound, raised its head and fixed a golden eye on Burks. Barely a second it scanned him—then, with another clanging scream, it launched itself upward, over their heads. The wind of its passing rumpled Hibbert's hair.

Burks looked after it, sighed, tucked the gun back under his belt.

"I shouldn't have done it! But it startled me." He tried to grin. "I guess I think with my gat, not my head!" He paused, added, "Makes you feel funny, shooting a bird like that—funnier than shooting a man. It was like breaking the stained glass window of a church."

None answered; their faces were turned to mark the bird's rising flight. The flamingo's hue was so akin to the blue of the sky that it was camouflaged, its position marked only by its cries and the sparkle of its flapping wings. Unreal it had seemed in the pool—aloft it was still more unreal, a phantom—transparent, a bird of blue glass!

Abruptly from sky to pool slanted a beam of intense yellow light, in angle and direction a continuation of the stairway. Bright as was the sun, the ray was brighter, searing the eyes which watched it, by contrast, turning the day to twilight. Whatever produced the light was indiscernible. It began at the point of the flamingo's screams. And it came in answer to those screams—Hibbert was sure of it!

Like a ship plunging about in heavy weather, the flamingo faltered in its flight, sinking with every slow and labored beat of its pinions. And as the yellow ray shot down to the pool the bird folded its wings—deliberately it folded them! In free fall it plummeted down to the water of the sawgrass swamp. It vanished beneath the spray of its splash and did not rise, though the ripples rolled away and the water calmed to glossy onyx.

"Did you see that?" Burks gasped. "The bird committed suicide!" Then, regretfully, "Seems I hurt it worse than I meant—I shot too straight. I'm sorry."

BUT Hibbert was looking at the pool. The shaft of light made a ten-foot ring on it. Bubbles, spangled with starry reflections, tumbled up to the light as though the ray were boiling the water. Yet Burks was still in the pool up to his knees, and walking to the radiance with no sign of discomfort.

He turned his hand this way and that in the golden glow. He stepped completely into the beam—and jumped as if smitten! He bent, felt the air before him as though groping in the dark. He straightened and planted a foot firmly on nothingness; rested weight on it and arose—placed the other foot a step higher and again drew himself upward. Two more such steps he took into vacancy before pausing. Now he was standing unsupported fully four feet above the water!

His voice was curiously muffled, fuzzy, "Don't you see it? A stairway! Another stairway!"

He climbed higher—higher yet—up into the ray of light. Hibbert remembered Jacob and the shining ladder to Heaven. The flaming rungs by which the souls of dead Egyptian kings reached Ra the sun.

He saw Burks pause, finger the non-existent steps before proceeding—saw Burks lift a hand and tug on something as though it barred his way. Whatever that hindrance might be it would not be budged. Burks temporised, then bent, apparently wedged himself through a cramped opening. On its other side he straightened, smoothed his rumpled clothing.

From forty feet above them Burks looked down and waved encouragingly—a man sig-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

naling from a boat to divers in the depths below.

Suddenly Hibbert itched to follow. Burks went curiously, but with the dispassionate, specialised curiosity of a scientist tracking down facts to their logical conclusion. Hibbert was moved, not by recklessness nor thirst for adventure. He was motivated by a hope of speeding the inevitable, of exorcising the ghostly foreboding which plagued him.

He did not remove his shoes. He went into the pool. Its water was so cold around his calves that it felt like the jaws of a trap. He plodded toward the light.

The move awoke Scarlatti from passive receptivity. He took his arm from around Carlotta, shook it in command. "Here, you!" he bellowed. "Come back here!"

Hibbert could not help hearing that clarion voice, but its words meant nothing. He was close to the light, almost within reach of it. Scarlatti shouted again and started for him, kicking up sapphire spray. Hibbert, under the spell of a sense of predestination, raced forward the last few steps to the radiance.

Carlotta dropped to her knees on the pool's rim as if her joints had melted. She held out her hands. Her voice cracking, she wailed, "No, don't—don't!" The giant ignored her, splashed angrily, purposefully onward.

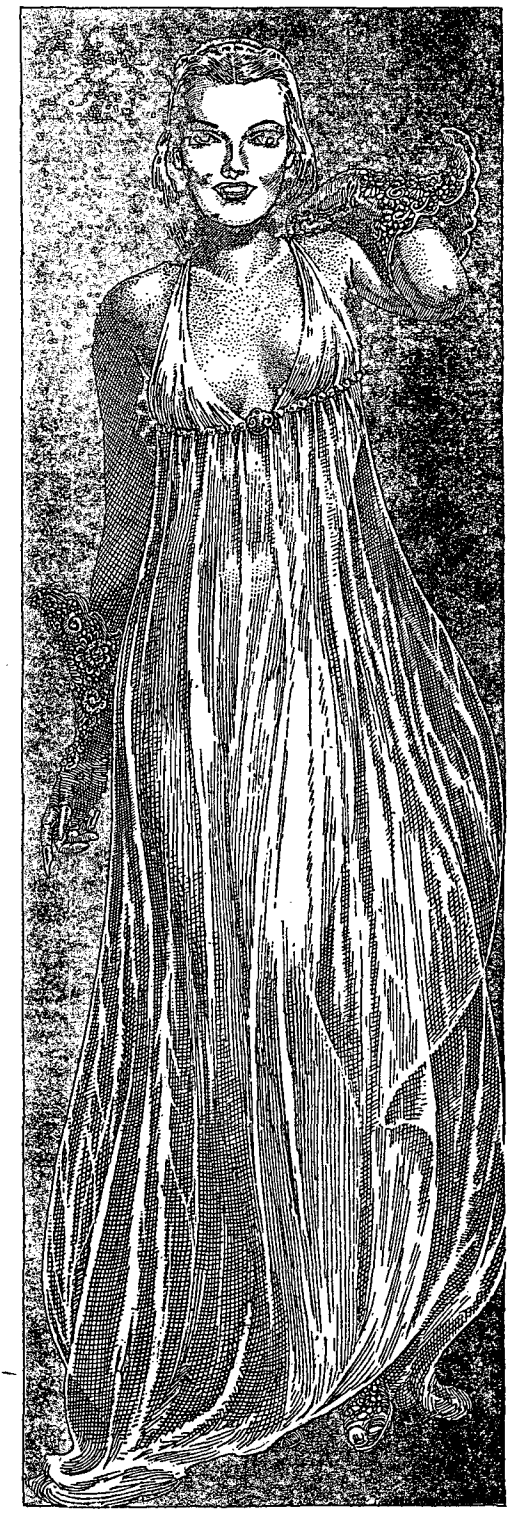
Hibbert barked his shins on something he could not see. He felt for it. The movement brought his face into the brilliance, and the obstacle was immediately revealed.

As Burks had told them there was a stairway. It angled up within the light as within a slanting golden tunnel. As far as Hibbert's fingers could tell, it was of stone—of the same pitted coral stone of the stairway in the garden—but of coral stone transmuted to yellow light!

Down it, like upholstery, ran velvet moss as yellow as the steps. On either side were walls of flowers, yellow-petaled, yellow-leafed and curiously misted—flowers of gold-foil which a passing breeze must surely cause to clash together in metallic jangle.

Blurred curtains of yellow vines obscured the higher steps. Was it on one of them that Burks had tugged? He remembered the man squeezing through the small opening; he must have crawled through a rent in the curtain.

Scarlatti pressed into the radiance, stumbled on the first step. He bent, as Burks and



Outside, in the dark corridor, a girl was waiting (CHAPTER IX)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hibbert had done, and felt of it. He swore incredulously. He straightened, gazed up the stairway, a specter of fear haunting his face. Then, conscious of Hibbert's scrutiny, he squared his shoulders, smiled confidently.

"Steps, huh," he said. "Well, what do you know!"

He crooked a finger, summoning Carlotta. She was rushing back and forth on the water's margin, a hen clucking distractedly at the duckling it had thought a chick. Her cries were muted—as though they came through thick glass.

AGAIN the giant beckoned Carlotta. Then—with a look of defiance for Hibbert—he left the radiance, went back for his woman. She flung herself toward him eagerly, face smoothed by relief. She thought he was heeding her warning!

She screamed raucously as he seized her outflung hands, as he dragged her down to him in the pool, screamed and fought him. The giant wrenched her off stance, swept an arm around her waist and struck down her beating hands. He forced her whimpering into the light, dropped her on the lowest of the yellow steps, mounted beside her.

"There ain't nothin' to be scared of—is there, toy-boy?" he growled. Yet there was a note of appeal in his voice, more for himself than for the woman.

Hibbert stooped to Carlotta, laid gentle hands on her shoulders. "Nothing's happened to us, Carlotta—we're all right! Lift your head and look at us."

Said Scarlatti, enthusiastically, "There's flowers, baby—gold flowers! We found us a fortune!"

She would not raise her head; shrugged off Hibbert's hands, lay sobbing, face hidden on arms. Finally she gasped, "I don't care if they're rubies! I want to get out of here!"

Scarlatti reached to draw her erect. She clawed furiously at him, her face still averted. A trace of the giant's temper returned. He lifted a huge hand to strike her. Hibbert caught it. For a moment the big man stared at him, sunken eyes beds of coals. Then he mastered himself, apparently approved Hibbert's intervention. He lowered the hand to his side.

Carlotta looked up to him at last, wiped a hand over her cheeks, smearing her tears. She whimpered, "We got to get out of here, Frank—we got to! It told us to beat it—it told us when it looked at me! It said we wasn't strong enough."

He shook her. "Who said it?"

"Don't look at me in that tone of voice—like you hate me! The bird said it, tha's who—the blue flamingo!"

His eyes widened, then narrowed. He breathed a gust of contempt. "Ah—you're bad as Burks!"

"I ain't—oh, Frank, honest I ain't!" Briefly she turned to Hibbert as though asking his help, then faced the giant again. "I heard it plain as a sock in the jaw when it looked at me—it sounded like an old gran'pa! An' it said we can't face what's up there!"

He did not reply, only gazed at her, nonplussed. She whimpered, "I promise I'll take you right out of this here swamp—I promise I won't lead you wrong no more, just 'cause I wanted bein' close to you long as I could!"

His voice shook with disgust. "So you done that, huh!" He cursed her so vilely that even she, long accustomed to his coarseness, was appalled. Hibbert gripped the giant's arm. Scarlatti swerved toward him with clenched hands. But he could not look into Hibbert's eyes, where but hours ago he would have struck the smaller man down.

He said uneasily, grudgingly, "Ah, well, maybe I been a little—hasty." And to the woman, "Stop the waterworks an' come on!"

"You ain't turnin' back?"

"If Step-an'-a-half here has the craw to go up—an' Burks—I guess I got enough, too!"

Carlotta pawed away the last vestiges of her tears, said determinedly, "Then I'm goin' with you."

"That's better, baby. Now let's give them flowers a look-see."

He reached for them but snatched his fingers back as if bee-stung. A drop of blood beaded one of them. "Hard an' glassy!" he mumbled around the knuckles.

More cautiously he closed his hand around a stem, tugged and sought to twist it. The petaled branch did not stir.

"Scarlatti—haven't you noticed?" Hibbert asked. "This stair is a faithful copy of the one down in the garden!"

But the big man was still struggling to tear off a flower. He abandoned the effort.

"Whatever this guck is, it ain't gold. Gold's soft. But look"—he demonstrated—"these petals is thinner'n tissue paper an' I can't even bend 'em!"

The gnawing foreboding drew Hibbert on. He made no reply but went up the steps.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER III

Stair's End

HE REACHED the first of the screens of bamboo-vine. For all his efforts, it would not budge nor bend. He crouched and bored himself through its largest opening. Why was this stair such a perfect duplication of the other, down to the last infinitesimal detail? As if it were a three-dimensional photograph!

A photograph? Here was a clue!

He remembered the stereoscope and certain motion-pictures based on the stereoscopic principle—the refractive blending of two pictures of some common object as seen from varying angles, producing an effect of solidity. Gripped by the delusion of substance, the audience had gasped at stop-camera magic of a rose, budding, blooming and withering away in a matter of seconds—had shrieked with delighted horror as the lensman's trickery enabled a skeleton to pluck off its skull and roll it like a bowling-ball straight to the watchers' eyes.

Could this duplicate stair be a vastly more intricate brand of stereoscopic projection, reproducing not only light but matter itself?

It seemed so—for as Hibbert approached a second web of hanging lianas, it was stirred by a gust he did not feel—a gust whose reality lay on that other stair down in the garden.

He watched the swaying lianas swing together and fall away, knew that were he to thrust his hand between them, they would crush it. He realized the danger, but did Scarlatti and the woman? Worried, he turned to make certain that neither of the pair was wriggling through that first set of vines. As he turned, the swaying ceased. The spectral gust had passed, far down in the garden.

He shouted: "Scarlatti—Carlotta! Stay as you are. Don't move!"

He scrambled, slipping and stumbling, down to them, regardless of the agony in his crippled leg. The flowers against which he brushed were unyielding to his weight. They ripped his clothing, scratched him.

He tried to explain to the giant and the woman what he had reasoned out but doubted that either understood. Yet while theories were beyond them, they had reacted to cold fact. The giant, ever observant, had guessed what might occur if, while wedging through the vines, they tightened upon him.

Nevertheless, Scarlatti took the risk simply because Hibbert had. He drew a deep breath and dropped to the largest aperture, literally shot through it. Carlotta moaned her misgivings but crouched, passed a hand to him. He dragged her through, helped her up.

THEY passed beyond the second curtain of vine, alert for threatening movement from it—and from the tiers of blooms on either side. Carlotta peered into the gathering mists ahead.

"Burks," she whispered. "I don't see no sign of Burks!"

"He's up there in that fog," the giant comforted her. He spoke to Hibbert: "I guess maybe if a dragon-fly come past, it'd drill us like a bullet!"

He grinned feebly, added, "If somebody's makin' this here Chink torture chamber with a movie camera, like you seem to think—I wonder if he's made the set-up this-a-way a-purpose. 'Cause if he has, he must be gettin' a whale of a kick—us runnin' the gantlet!"

The golden haze thickened as they arose—thickened and brightened. Close together as they were, it isolated them with intervening veils of ochre. Like dust it hampered their breathing. Less substantial than water, still it resisted their movements. They pushed through it as through successive cobwebs.

"Hey, Burks!" Scarlatti shouted. His breath shone yellow as if steaming in chilly air. But the mist was pleasantly warm. Burks' answer seemed to fall from a tremendous height.

"I'm waiting for you. Make it snappy!" Then: "Something's wrong—I'm goin' deaf!"

They hurried forward. As the mist increased in density, it grew in brilliancy as if its particles were radiance solidified—a vapor composed of billions of tiny suns! Hibbert could no longer see the giant and the woman nor the hand that he raised to his eyes. Golden blindness. . . .

Hibbert bumped something yielding—Burks. He heard the man's voice muted into the sigh of a ghost.

"I can hardly hear myself but I'm yelling my head off!"

Scarlatti advocated gripping hands for the rest of the climb. Save for the feel of his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

great paw, there was only the silence and yellowness of burial in a heap of gold-dust.

With no warning whatever, they broke from the yellow blindness into purplish murk veined with racing flame! A bewildering chaos of polychromatic fire which zigzagged erratically, confusedly—and pain—but such pain as the four in all their combined experience had never known!

It was unendurable, Hibbert thought. Unendurable—he repeated, even as he endured it.

He recovered first, though it was less recovery than becoming accustomed to the anguish. Throughout every atom of his being shivered a vibration, a tingling faster than the twinkle of any star; the tiny hoofbeats of a horde of racing flamelets; the sparks of a radioactive clock ticking the billionths of a second.

But there was far too much in his surroundings to be assimilated in one cursory glance. He absorbed it particle by particle.

CHAPTER IV

Those Above

FIRST—the air itself. Purplish, yes, but hardly murk. Hibbert could see through it, but as through a distorting lens. Things trembled like the reflections of a restless pond. Yet, as he adjusted himself to this difference, he soon forgot it.

Burks and the giant and Carlotta were rigid as effigies in their violently distorted poses—Burks with head thrown back on bow-bent spine, hands clawing his throat as if to rip out its pain. Carlotta to one side, reaching to the man she loved, her face like whitest parchment. And Scarlatti, unseeing eyes wide over a body on which every bunched muscle bulged.

They had entered a room perhaps thirty yards square whose walls rose to such heights that they joined in a pinpoint of perspective. They shone softly, as if painted with a nacreous solution.

The floor was the clearest of mirrors. Directly ahead was a door, an archway sealed with ponderous leaves of brass. Thirty feet in height, it was doubled by its reflected image into a citron-yellow circle twice that in width. At each side of it, on pedestals like glowing embers, crouched two of the most singular sculptures Hibbert had ever seen.

He fancied that they breathed and hastily told himself that it could not be so—and hoped he had not lied. Their eyes—gigantic and human eyes devilishly out of keeping with their bodies of beasts—glared with vitality that was life and something brighter still than life.

In shape they resembled the Fu dogs of the Chinese—those monstrous beasts inhabited by the souls of warriors gloriously dead. Crouched on their pedestals, they were full forty feet tall—how much taller when standing erect, Hibbert did not like to conjecture. He forced his eyes from their motionless menace toward the stair up which they had come.

There was no stair! There was only what seemed, at first glance, like a tremendous golden gong hanging from an ebon frame! The black rim was studded with jewels of red and green and blue. Squat black pillars upheld the ebon rim and its golden disc. They were carved with flowers and fantastic beasts intricately twined.

BEHIND the—gong?—were people, six of them—four standing in a row; blue-robed, heads shrouded by hoods, motionless as the Fu dogs. On each side of the golden disc kneeled another—a man and a woman. Like those standing, they wore shifts of blue—a filmy fabric which must have been spun from cocoons. Their hands were crossed on their breasts, and their faces were hidden. Their hair streamed upward weightlessly, tawny as flame itself.

Hibbert felt himself a man among an array of tinted statues. He went to the ebon frame, fingered it. He pushed the flat of a hand to the surface of the disc. His palm pierced the glow as if thrust into water!

The back of the gong seemed no different from its front but he could not bring his fingers within a foot of it. They were repelled as if they pushed against a powerful spring. He decided that—if the stair were both light and matter ingeniously projected—the jeweled, black rim constituted the projector's lenses.

He would have gone to the six silent figures but now he caught the flicker of Burks' eyelids. The man's hands relaxed and lowered. He straightened, gazed dazedly around. He pivoted, shook the giant. Scarlatti re-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lapsed from rigor as, almost in the same breath, did Carlotta. The big man yawned and stretched as if emerging from long sleep. Carlotta finished the paralysis-interrupted gesture of reaching for him, caught his arm.

Scarlatti's voice was still as muffled as it had been in the golden mist, but from his lips spewed a torrent of writing color. Burks' voice came weakly: "What the heck—?" From his mouth spurted opalescence and Carlotta squeaked with dismay at the sight. It was but the faintest of cries and, with it, wreathing color flamed from her mouth.

Hibbert had the answer to that puzzle. "It's probably not so uncanny as it seems. Sound and light are related, being basically energy, the source of all phenomena." He noted that he too was possessed of the fire-breathing quality. His words rose in a polychrome wall, shutting off sight of the others.

SCARLATTI observed sarcastically, "Huh, you know ev'rythin', don't you!" He frowned at the six strangers guarding the disc. He said, "Maybe you figgered I was yellow while we was on the steps. Yeah, an' maybe you showed a little more stuff than me—but that was 'cause you knew all the answers an' I didn't. I was scared? But I ain't scared no more. An' I ain't goin' to be, not again!"

"But"—Carlotta pointed with a dig of her chin—"them tigers or lions, or whatever they are by the doors!"

"Them?" His laughter spiralled, like tiny whirlpools tinted with oil. "Don't you know statues when you see 'em?"

"An'—an' them?" She indicated the six silent figures.

He answered by striding briskly to them, by tapping smartly on the kneeling man's shoulder. He said gruffly: "Hey, you!"

The man's face lifted, ruddy hair streaking back like the twisting flame of a brandished torch. Blue sparks shot from it. And there was a faint snapping as if—far away—someone had cracked a whip.

Confronted by that countenance, Scarlatti stood a moment in rigid dismay, then faltered, drew back. Nor despite his boast of future fearlessness, could Hibbert blame the man.

The upturned face was like an angel's—but a dweller of no heaven ever before described. It was strong in its masculine sharpness of plane, brimful of settled character despite the utter lack of crease or line. Mature but ageless—serene but terrifying!

Wherein lay its terror? And why did it seem so familiar? Hibbert looked down at it, at the blue eyes clear as sapphires in whitest porcelain. And realized.

It was a face of sheer perfection in its lack of human expression, lack of human blemishes. The skin was so fine as to be seen without pores—each hair of the brows and lashes as faultlessly placed as if counted, weighed and measured before insertion into the flesh by the tweezers of the master artisan who had shaped the face.

That was it—this visage appeared not to have born as other men are born. In its absolute inhumanity, it was the face of an atuomaton—the face of—Burks!

CHAPTER V

The Hand

THE only touch of the carnal in that face was its maleness, bespeaking sex and therefore the need of physical generation. What code of thought and custom did this enigmatic man represent? How must it conflict with that of Hibbert's friends and himself?

And now the kneeling woman had raised her head, her face the feminine counterpart of the man's. Doll-faces both—but dolls disquietingly alive; dolls equipped with powers beyond the most advanced scientists of the world.

Hibbert was afraid—afraid as was Scarlatti, in spite of the giant's boast.

The eyes of both kneeling figures held steadily to the big man and, step by slow step, he withdrew from them. One of his hands felt behind him, in search of Carlotta, and she grasped it, almost in joy—for at last he was turning to her for support.

He faced his people, his frown asking the question he could not voice. Should they not, after all, go back to the swamp despite its hazards? Hazards, perhaps deadly, but at least of which there was a hope and the chance of combating!

"A perfect hideaway! Nobody's got anything against us, up here," Burks exulted. "We play our cards right and maybe we can stay here for keeps. At last I'll have a clean slate! And I like it—I always wanted it!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He was rapt with hope, was suddenly, startlingly beautiful, his radiant face very like those of the kneeling people as he breathed, "But here—I've got my chance!"

Carlotta shattered the second of sorcery. She snarled, "Listen to you—an' us with two strikes on us already! Or maybe you forgot you rubbed out the blue flamingo. I suppose you think the manager of this place will go for that!"

And with her practical brand of imagination, "Why, maybe it was his pet, or somethin'!"

Burks' hope was wiped away by a hand of darkness, leaving black and deadly hate. He sprang catlike at the woman, all his beauty replaced with reptilian coldness. Yet he caught himself, his feet skidding on the smooth flooring.

"Blast you for reminding me—for killing my dream!"

Carlotta's mouth opened for some vicious rejoinder. Hibbert thrust himself between the two, lifted hands to expostulate, to quiet them. But Scarlatti drew their attention by swinging one arm and pointing.

"Get a load of them!"

The kneeling figures had arisen! They stood stiffly, hands crossed on breasts. The shapes in blue had gone to the ebon frame, were fingering—with cloth-concealed hands—the jewels studding the black circle. The golden radiance was dimming, was dying away.

"They're puttin' out the light!" Scarlatti cried shrilly. "They're closin' the way out! They can't do that to us—pen us up like hogs!"

He started forward. "Hey, you! lay off—d' you hear me?" Then, as they went on about their business without indication of hearing him: "Why, you—"

His hand flew to his gun. Before he could fire it, indeed even as he swung it up, Burks struck at him, tore the gun from him.

"You fool!" Burks raged. "Didn't I tell you? They mustn't have anything against us. We want them for our friends!"

"Huh!" Carlotta fleered.

His eyes spat flame at her as he thrust the giant's .38 in his belt. He turned to the frame's attendants and strove to placate them with a bland and reassuring smile. But they had not paid any attention whatsoever to the intruders.

The last vestige of golden glory vanished. The frame was empty, a great black hoop, carved and begemmed, hanging between its pillars.

"It's all your fault!" Scarlatti screamed, voice treble in rage as a child's.

UNREASONING, he struck blindly at Burks, sent him reeling before the man could touch his weapons, arrowed after him, precise as a panther, despite his mighty bulk. His fists flew so rapidly that Burks, on the defensive, had no opportunity to snatch at his guns.

Carlotta shoved Hibbert aside, a knife glinting in her head. The men were locked together as she rushed them. Scarlatti unwittingly protected Burks from the knife by lurching against the woman, throwing her back.

Hibbert caught her from behind, pulled her from the fray, tripped her. She swept out her hands to break the fall, dropped the blade. Hibbert's foot lashed under her falling body, kicked the knife spinning over the slick floor until it clanged against the base of one of the Fu dogs.

Barely had he completed that kick when Carlotta rebounded from her fall, was upon her knees with her arms around his waist, pulling him sidewise and down. She rolled atop him, biting and scratching.

Meanwhile Scarlatti had aimed a clout which would have hurled Burks off his feet, had the fist made contact. But Burks ducked, shot a foul punch in return. Scarlatti folded up, groaning, sank weaving to the floor.

The blue-robed figures stood patiently in the background, in nowise perturbed.

Carlotta's nails raked Hibbert's forehead—she was reaching for his eyes. She slipped her hands to his throat, clenching them, strangling—but by then Burks was upon her, had hauled her away.

As the giant gathered himself for another leap Burks stepped smartly away from anyone's reach. He plucked the guns from his belt, and held them in readiness, coolly as though he had been standing by while the others fought.

"One move from any of you and I'll plug you—so help me!"

Scarlatti growled rippling radiance. Carlotta stared from wide and frenzied eyes, fingers curving into ugly hooks as she caressed a bruised chin.

"I like it here—and here I'm going to stay," Burks went on. "If I can persuade whoever runs this joint that I'm worth my

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keep—which I am! And none of you had better get in my way, not while I've got these heaters in my mitts. Get me?"

He looked to them all for answer, read grudging acquiescence in the sulky gazes of the giant and the woman, nudged his gun toward Hibbert until the youngster nodded.

The giant whined, "They was closin' the way out! I just wanted to stop 'em until we knew what's the reason for this place an' whether we better fix or fade!"

And as Burks' guns waved him back, he added, "Sure, you could park here all you wanted—tha's your routine, not mine. But why've the rest of us got to stay if we don't like it?"

Burks said: "Because you're a kid, Frank—just a big, dumb kid. Somebody's always got to watch over you and tell you what to do. And I'm doing it now. I'm telling you—we stick!"

Burks sheathed his guns. He said, "Well—we may as well bury the hatchet. The way back is gone. We'll play the game according to Hoyle until we find the cards are marked. Always case the joint before you pull the job."

"If anythin' happens to Frank up here on 'count of you kept him here," Carlotta cried, "I'll sing about the blue flamingo an' how you drilled it. An' if that don't put 'em on your tail I'll take over myself!"

Frantically her eyes broomed the floor in quest of her knife, located it at the Fu dog's feet. She began a move, perhaps to start for it, swung her gaze swiftly and distrustfully to the fiery eyes above, squirmed with repulsion and relaxed, sighing.

BURKS' retort, had he intended one, never took form. A voice boomed out—it seemed to come from every side, from a source they could not see. Vast it was and deep.

"Welcome!" It drummed. And it thundered, "Warning! Newcomers to Khoire! Are you here in purity of mind and purpose? If not—pray to your gods but not to us for cleansing!

"It matters not your reason in coming! For here you are, and here—for a prescribed time—you must stay! Not as prisoners but as honored guests, even though you hold not the Sign! A peaceful people, we of Khoire, as perhaps your priests have taught you.

"We offer no threat, yet here is danger—from within yourselves. Therefore be warned and abjure all evil, whether in deed or in thought—for here thought and deed are as one. And again—welcome!"

A pause followed—during which Scarlatti climbed shakily to his feet and Carlotta fastened upon him. Then the voice resounded again and without the seething color which always accompanied their own—nor could they discover its origin.

"Our Law is that we detain you until you reveal both selves and motives, not by word alone, nor deed—but by your very being! For such as you are—you shall become!" Then, more softly, on a note of dismissal, "Go now to Patur, who awaits you."

Burks said, "I didn't get the meaning of all that but I gather we've been told to mind our manners."

Carlotta wailed, "Frank, lover-boy—I told you what the flamingo said—an' you wouldn't listen!"

Scarlatti snarled to Burks, "You wouldn't let me stop them from shuttin' that blasted door. Now we're in for a sweat!"

[*Turn page*]

CAN YOUR SCALP PASS THE
*F-N TEST?
*The Famous Finger Nail Test
"It's F-N, the test for men!" Scratch your head—if you find dryness or loose dandruff you need Wildroot Cream-Oil. Buy the large economy size.
YOUR HAIR CAN LOOK LIKE THIS WITH NEW
WILDROOT CREAM-OIL
A little Wildroot Cream-Oil does a big job for your hair. Keeps it well groomed all day long without a trace of that greasy, plastered down look! Get Wildroot Cream-Oil from your barber or toilet goods counter.
CREAM-OIL CHARLIE SAYS: "IT CONTAINS LANOLIN!"
AND TUNE IN: TWO NETWORK SHOWS! "The Adventures of Sam Spade" Sunday evenings, CBS Network; "King Cole Trio Time" Sat. afternoons, NBC Network.
WILDROOT
CREAM-OIL
HAIR TONIC
LANOLIN

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Could you have stopped them?" Hibbert mused. "Would a shot have done any good?" Catching a movement behind him, he turned.

The frame's six guardians were approaching, the man and woman taller than the giant as Hibbert had imagined. They floated rather than walked, as if it were more effort to touch feet to the floor than to lift them from it. They banded themselves on each side of the newcomers to Khoire. One raised an arm, pointed to the brazen portals. From above them the eyes of the Fu dogs burned down—the white-fanged jaws were grinning.

The brass leaves slid back into the walls, light streaking from them like a flight of green-gold javelins. Beyond lay blackness.

Burks nodded with exaggerated heartiness to the pointing form. He started for the blackness with every evidence of trust and lack of fear. Hibbert, neither confident nor dauntless, went along with him simply because it was the only thing to do. Scarlatti hung back and with him the woman.

The giant stamped great foot on the glass, scattering a spray of vehement fire, "I ain't goin'!"

The blue-clad shape which had pointed and which indeed was pointing still, raised its arm higher, flexed it. The sleeve-hidden hand caught the drapery over the face, began to lift it.

At the movement Carlotta shrieked and hid her eyes against Scarlatti's chest. The big man's knees buckled; his face paled to wax. Hibbert unashamedly clutched Burks, who stopped tense, mouth agape.

The blue-robe's arm did not bend at the elbow, but snakily all along its length. As it curled, it drew back, shortened the sleeve. Not five but a dozen fingers slipped out—white-fleshed and translucent, pebbled with glistening gelatinous lumps—boneless! Not fingers at all but tentacles!

They had seen enough. The hand did not lift the cowl—instead dropped its hem and fell lax, concealed once more by the sleeve. Scarlatti, huddling the woman close, scurried forward without another word to Burks and Hibbert. Behind marched the blue-robes and the flame-haired pair.

"I thought they were people!" Burks said. Then, more sure of himself, "Well, as long as they act like people, they're the same thing and they'll give us the same deal. Who's afraid!"

He pushed Hibbert away, stiffened his spine, took a deep breath—and smiled. Scarlatti absorbed a little of his courage.

Carlotta cringed as they stepped toward the door. When they passed the Fu dogs she dashed out, caught up her knife, then scampered back to the reassurance of Scarlatti's arms.

They left the pearl-walled chamber. Blackness closed in on them.

CHAPTER VI

The Crystal Mask

IT WAS not the lightlessness of empty space. Their feet pattered, with little beats of light, on a surface which Hibbert discerned was a continuation of the mirror.

On they went, and on. Occasionally Hibbert heard a low hum which filled all the air, ceased and was renewed. And curious blasts of wind smote him from haphazard sources as if unseen doors in the darkness opened upon stormy weather.

Burks was watching his bare feet and their mirrored images. He said, "The scar's still there, so I guess the water wasn't magic after all!"

They were taken around some invisible turn for, though they seemed to be walking straight forward, there was a queer weaving sensation, a backing up and a shifting aside. Hibbert sensed it by the gravitational drag of his body, the rush of air in his ears. He gave but passing heed to this locomotive eccentricity, entirely unaware of its full significance.

In the middle of this motion he glimpsed a string of iridescent bubbles hanging in the air like a crystal necklace, thought them near and reached for them. But they were far away and small as beads only because diminished by distance. Their highlights were singular in shape—oddly human, as if people were riding within them. In another moment they had faded from sight and with them went the soprano murmur which they made.

He walked along with the others—still straight ahead, it seemed, yet he knew they were ascending steeply. A line of yellow light flashed out, widening into an immense door of brass. Drawn double its length by the mirror, it looked like an enormous yellow-lit window. It opened to admit them.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They crossed the threshold of a large room whose ceiling, though high, was not lost as that of the frame's chamber in a pinpoint of perspective. Its walls were as green as if built from blocks of deepest emerald and illumined from behind.

Directly opposite the entrance was either a large round mirror of black glass, or a window opening upon gloom such as that which they had just traversed. On either side of it were tall pedestals of the rubrous stone.

A man awaited them; small, incredibly ancient. His age was revealed not in his face, for the skin was unlined and youthfully pink, but in the tired droop which comes with the years and in his slanting, feline eyes. His hair was like sand-blown silver and softly reflected the light.

His loose and shapeless coat was of heavy rust-colored material. He had been fingering a loop of dark stones, perhaps a rosary, fastened to his girdle. He dropped it at their advent and bent laboriously in the deepest of bows.

He said, without trace of flame, lips scarcely moving, "Greetings, strangers." His voice was old, like a cracked violin. Hibbert wondered that it did not appear as color, as did his own, forgot the puzzle as the oldester continued:

"I am Patur, keeper of this Central Gate. Come forward and make yourselves known."

HE STRAIGHTENED, spread out his hands invitingly, studied them as they advanced toward him—Burks boldly, Hibbert numbly, Scarlatti and Carlotta none too eagerly. The blue-robed beings backed out into the blackness. The door closed on them.

The flame-haired man and woman drifted forward, outstripping the strangers, posted themselves one at each end of the cubes. Patur spoke wearily yet hopefully, a chaplain facing a group of convicts just prior to their walking the Last Mile.

"Your auras are peppered with interrogation points! Let me answer your questions then—not by speech but by a course more expedient."

He nodded to the flame-tressed woman at the cube on his right. She touched the block of red stone. Its upper surface swung back like a lid. She reached deep into the cube, drew from it something which glittered like sunfired dewdrops, its lights translated to brittle tinklings like music tapped on timbrels of glass. It was a full-size crystal mask with a beard-like black handle on its chin. Deferentially she handed it to Patur.

Her mate on the oldster's left tipped up the cover of the second cube. He brought forth a bundle of shimmering stuff like a compact mass of milkweed down, its lustrous white shot with filaments of scarlet.

He threw it into the air before Patur's bench. It unfurled and hung without support, the scarlet threads radiating from its center like the guide-lines of a spider's web.

The old man bent. He caught a dangling twain of the red filaments, pressed them to the mask's handle, establishing electrical contact. He held the crystal curvature so that all might see it.

"Perhaps you know this—and its use?"

They stared, shook their heads. Finally Hibbert inquired, "A disguise of some sort?" And answered himself, "No, hardly that—since it's transparent."

"Indeed, hardly a disguise! No, it is the antithesis of the ordinary mask, which is meant to conceal its wearer's identity. This is a teller of truths. Nor is it surprising that you do not know it, since few visitors from below, at least of recent times, have been able to circumvent it."

He went on, "Your scientists have devices —electroencephalographs—for the recording of human brain waves. This mask merely proceeds a step farther along that particular path of research. It not only makes a continuous graph of the brain's radiations but reconverts them into the visual images and sounds of the original thoughts and memories, projecting them upon this screen"—he indicated the web before him—"that many may look simultaneously into the mental processes of one.

"Here in Khoire we have stored away millions of such graphs, fresh and vital as they were in the moment of their recording. Though the minds that made them perished centuries ago still we can look into them, adding to our knowledge."

He adjusted the mask to his face. Through it came his voice, in nowise muffled.

"I will demonstrate its use, that you may learn in all swiftness who I am and what my background—and, in the learning, discover what kind of land unto which you are come and something of its customs—too, of its perils."

He leaned forward. "Observe!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER VII

A House in Khoire

THE web quivered as if, truly a spider's product, it had trapped some unwary and frantic prey. Abruptly it vanished and, with it, all which lay beyond—the old man and his servants, the bench and black window. In the very second of their vanishment a miniature landscape replaced them.

Solid, three-dimensional to the eyes, it was exquisitely fashioned, a masterpiece of the model-maker's craft. Hibbert regarded it as the handicraft of a tireless artisan because it was—in terms of his own world—physically impossible.

It was as much a landscape of sounds as it was of substance!

In a flash Hibbert saw it—for this introductory picture was of briefest duration. It was principally a honeycomb, a ragged, decayed one, a haphazard skeleton of jumbled and phosphorescent bones clothed sparsely with flesh of wanly luminous mist. To right and left it stretched, above and below, with the suggestion of unbounded distance.

It was blotched as if with some fungoid blight. Peering closer, Hibbert discerned that these stains were structures, pin-point small, surrounded by gardens of glowing vegetation, and linked by paths and stairs. They speckled the floors of the honeycomb's cells, dotted its walls, hung inverted like tiny truncated stalactites from the ceilings!

Hibbert understood: Patur's picture was showing them the difference between his own world and this. It was not so much as though the picture grew before him, but that he was traveling within it. He seemed to enter a dwelling as its door yawned wide before him; passed through a zigzag corridor into a small domed chamber like the hollowed heart of a milky moon. Its lower half was lined like a bird's nest with down, on which a woman lay as if in bed.

She was as inhumanly perfect as Patur and his two servants, and her hair floated above her like sunset mist. She was nursing a wee infant, and beside her a man was kneeling. From his expression of pride and love, Hibbert knew him for the woman's husband and father of the child.

"Little Patur!" she cooed. Then, to the man, "We must begin his training at once, my love. Patur is only a mite. But I've been thinking of Wyssa and I'm afraid. She waited too long—and what of her child? It became a tree!"

The father bent to the baby. "There's no danger until we see traces—"

"Of scale or leaf or fur," she finished for him. "Oh, we cannot wait, cannot take that risk! Better trained too early than too late!"

The picture blurred, faded, was replaced by another. But in the clock's tick of transition Hibbert sifted the import of what he had seen. What kind of a world was this, where father and mother feared that their child might mature not into a human being, as he was born, but—a plant?

Well, for one thing the atmosphere here was not as below, nor gravitational influences the same. Those two facts in themselves could divert evolution from its wonted track. Might not this even be the explanation of the blue flamingo!

Somehow the parent birds had found entrance and egress to and from Khoire. During their sojourn in this eerie region, their genes had been afflicted by the light—and thus their offspring emerged from its shell a mutant, blue instead of the customary flamingo-pink. And too—it would explain Carlotta's amazing assertion that the bird had talked with her.

HE STOLE a glance at the others, to see how they were taking it. Burks was accepting Khoire's outré conditions without a qualm, his flawless face composed and even approving. Carlotta was round-eyed and uncomprehending. Scarlatti still nibbled his knuckles.

The web shivered. Hibbert saw the exterior of the house from one of its gardens. The flowers were lovely as they were strange. Hibbert thought he could identify blooms from his own world—marigolds and violets, the smallest plants present, rising fifteen feet in height, their heads a full yard across.

Into this garden came the child—no baby now but five years old—and his father. The youngster pulled at a leaf as he passed a plant. The leaf flinched as if his jerk had hurt it.

"Patur!" his father remonstrated and followed with a lecture. The plants behind him leaned as if listening, and wagged their leaves as if in approval.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The child asked, "Father, can you change yourself into anything? A river—a bird—a rock?"

"I can become whatever I know and understand. Most forms of lower life, yes. But nothing greater than myself—or I would choose to remain the greater thing. To understand is to become. In understanding is wisdom. The sole purpose of all living is to amass wisdom, to become greater. Like the Great Ones we serve and worship."

The child asked, "Then is that why our barbarian cousins of the world below have wars and kill each other? Because they don't understand—don't put themselves in each other's places?"

* * * * *

Now they saw a scene of worship. A full mile slender pillars soared from meadow-wide floor to vaulted ceiling, its lofty fretwork of white stone more delicate than the complex carvings of the Orientals—paned with subdued splendors of stained glass holy in their mellow richness, prayers expressed in color and patient handiwork.

If its floor were paved with mosaic or slabs of stone, Hibbert could not tell—for so thickly serried was the multitude of worshipers that not an inch of pavement was discernible. The temple was flagged with humanity! And over all those crouching, reverent beings their masses of flaming hair floated and blent in a sea of smouldering scarlet.

In perfect unison their massed voices blended into one tremendous tide of sound—the tolling of a bell carved from a world-large block of flawless crystal and clappered by the will, the soul, of an entire race of beings—rolled surging in chant:

"Of You we ask nothing. To whom all has been given, have we but the eyes to see and cherish! We come to reaffirm our vow to ourselves—that we will learn the true wisdom and grow greater, maturing even into such as our Great Ones, our masters, who were once but men such as we!"

On rolled that mighty flood of merged voices, surely to break upon the shores of the Cosmic Consciousness! "Greater-than-men we will become—even as is our priest before us!"

The remainder of the pictures were as succinct as they were informative. Hibbert now saw Patur in this very green-walled, black-windowed room—a Patur physically mature but young in carriage and manner, who received visitors from the world below—a Patur who aged between receptions in a matter of seconds, since for sake of dramatic emphasis he condensed centuries of intramundane communication into one solitary scene—a Patur whose melting like a witch's waxen doll into the round shoulders and slumping spine of ancient age raised whimpers of protest from the outraged Carlotta.

And if it was a bizarre miscellany which had found its way up to Khoire, Hibbert wondered how much quainter still was the body of those who, through the ages, had ventured into the Everglades. For, beside the Indians and hunters whom Hibbert had reason to expect in the swamps, there were a swarthy Mayan warrior in quilted armor and flowing plumes; a viking Norseman in torn and rusted mail, blond hair and beard tumbling yellow from his winged helmet.

There were a band of Spaniards arrogant in equipage of damascened gold; pirates shifty-eyed and ratlike, for all their brave flaunt of colored array; several stiff-backed British redcoats doggedly restraining their responses; cowering Negroes who perhaps were fugitive slaves; a haggard madwoman in bedraggled, bustled skirts of the Eighties, live snakes coiled like bracelets on her arms.

And at the end of this motley procession, goading Carlotta into a gasp, then a careful and admiring appraisal of the self portrayed, came the very four who watched this picture—Hibbert and Burks, Scarlatti and his woman!

CHAPTER VIII

Bravado

BLANK went the web. It was again only gossamer fabric threaded with scarlet. Through it they saw Patur removing the crystal mask from his face. He passed it to the manservant beside him.

He said, "You have seen and now know not only me but this land of Khoire. Therefore please be so good as to hold the mask as I have held it, each of you in turn. And whatever is asked you, envision to the best of your ability. Thus I shall know your identities and motives and, knowing, discern what to do with you—and do about you. And it may be"—there was threat, not in his tone but in his choice of words—"do to you!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The manservant took the mask and carried it around the floating web. He offered it to Hibbert. Indifferently Patur took the necklace from his girdle and idly passed its beads with his left hand through the bore of the thumb and forefinger of his right.

Hibbert steadied his trembling hand and lifted the mask. He sent a glance of forced confidence, of defiance, at the others. Patur's man bowed again and withdrew to his place beside the greybeard.

The curved plane of crystal was curiously light, its trifling weight centered upon its handle. By some optical trickery Hibbert could discern only a star-small portion of the web before him, its scarlet threads running together, coalescing into a solid rusty weave.

He felt the same protesting terror as when, a long time previously, his lame leg had been subjected to a surgeon's knife and the ether-mask inexorably clamped to his nostrils. That memory must have registered upon the screen. He heard a surprised squeal from Carlotta.

"Good," Patur said. "Retain the mask thus and think upon each word I mention."

"Home" was one, "family" another, also "pleasure", "pain" and "success". Dutifully Hibbert strove to envision them as concretely as possible.

He heard Scarlatti mumble to Burks, "That there mask's worth a mint of money in Hollywood! You don't need to hire no hams—just dream up the whole works an' have somebody photograph it!"

"Please—no interruptions!" Patur warned austerely. "They drag the mind from its trend and—as you see—curtail the pictures." Then, only a few moments after Hibbert had raised the crystal, "Enough, Hibbert! I thank you. Be so kind as to pass the mask to the man on your left. To"—he hesitated, then gave the name—"to Burks."

And Hibbert realized that all the salient facts of his existence, passing in review by command of Patur's master-words, were known to all present—from earliest childhood to this latest moment.

He handed Burks the mask, his gaze searching Patur's face for the oldster's verdict on what had been his life. But Patur looked the same as before, old and wise and pitying—and aloof in his pity.

Burks seized the mask as a doomed man might seize a reprieve, his fingers shaking as he thrust it in place. Patur repeated to him the words given to Hibbert, and "right" was among them and "wrong"—"failure" and "beauty" and "death".

AND in curious hop-skip-and-jump fashion, in flashbacks and anachronistic anticipations—a picture-puzzle whose pieces were spread out for assembling by the hands of Time—Burks' life was blazoned before them.

Child of fanatically strict parents, he had rebelled in his early years at their narrow rule, inspired by fascination and envy of the pranks and at most, half-sins, of his schoolmates—whom his tight-lipped mother shrilly condemned as "imps of hell".

He replied to his father's merciless beatings by running away from home, was caught and shipped to reform-school, emerged therefrom at sixteen equipped with sordid information which—when self-righteous neighbors held his record against him—he did not hesitate to use. But bitter as were his lessons, equally great was his profit from them. He had come to know character, but neither his understanding nor his forgiveness of people could change their views on him.

Sociologically speaking, he had gone from bad to worse—from the standpoint of self-preservation, from bad to better. He trusted no one, shunned men except to plunder them. And yet—his reaction to that word "success" was only a vision of himself in a drab little dwelling, surrounded by wife, children and friends.

He lowered the mask and, as Hibbert had done, looked to Patur for signs of approbation or contempt—and found none. The mask passed to Carlotta. Her memories wedged wan little gleams into a procession of sickly shadows—her father a gambler, her mother a neglectful gossip, herself a rather pretty child under her dirt. Attentions given by pitying neighbors turned her head.

At fourteen one of her father's cronies dazzled her with glittering promises and she eloped with him. Soon he deserted her. She walked the streets, was arrested and placed in detention. An inmate gave her an address which she visited when freed. There she met the giant. Instantly she loved him. From that moment forward she served and worshiped him, treasuring kisses and blows alike.

She did not look to Patur for his reaction, as had the men before her. Nor would she look at them. She sat with her eyes following the play of her trembling fingers in her lap. And Hibbert wondered what else the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mask over her face would have revealed at that moment.

Came now the giant's turn. He scowled at the mask but did not lift it. His mouth was set awry, his deep-set eyes under their screening brows like hunted things at bay.

Patur gestured. "Please!"

Scarlatti backed warily away. "The hell with it—the hell with all of you!"

Burks felt at his belt for guns, realized that one was missing and flashed a sharp query at Hibbert. The giant softened his voice, half-bowed to Patur, spoke with unbecoming humility.

"Later on I'll do it. But not in front of these people! What I been an' what I done is strickly private!"

Perhaps Patur really considered the unexpected delicacy of the giant's feelings—or perhaps he had gleaned enough of him from the thoughts of the others to classify him.

He said, "We force none, here. And now"—his gaze swept them—"have you any questions?"

The giant bared his teeth in an unpleasantly triumphant grin and returned to his seat beside Carlotta.

Burks forgot the purloined gun, murmured pensively, "Well, we know what this place is like now—even if we don't know how it got this way. But maybe we'll find out in due time. All I really want to know right this minute is—was everything you showed us gospel truth?"

The oldster flushed indignantly at the implication of a lie, conquered the feeling, gravely bowed assent.

"Then, Patur—Mister Patur," Burks sought to convey his respect for the greybeard, "correct me if I'm wrong. We've got to stay here for a while, but we can't stay forever. We stick around until the nature of this place goes to work on us—until we turn into what our minds are. Like if I'm a snake in the grass, that's what I turn into—a snake. Right?"

Again Patur nodded.

Burks said, "It's done, of course, to scare the people below from coming up here—unless they're the proper sort and can't change into anything else. I see all that. But"—he cocked an anxious eye—"supposing someone really wants to stay here?"

And, before the old man could reply, "You and your people are great! Sure, they run things differently and life's a lot more complicated here—but I like it. And I haven't done anything—and won't—against you."

HE REDDENED, glanced at the others, pressed on fervently, "I like these big guns you call the Greater-than-men—I like them as much as you do. And I'd be just as glad as you would to get even the chance of emptying their garbage. All I know about them is what you showed—but it's sufficient. And I'd rather rot in whatever you have here that corresponds to prison than be a free man and own the whole blasted works down below!"

There was no promise in the oldster's smile for all its pity. He said, "My son, our Law is older than your entire race! It was made wisely and cannot be altered. None can remain here beyond the prescribed time unless they have come in knowledge. And bearing the Sign."

Burks' voice dropped to a grating whisper. "Then I have to go back?"

"I fear so, my son," Patur said reluctantly. "But,"—he lightened his tone to one of cheer—"it need not be permanent exile There are masters of wisdom below who know of Khoire—cults which can be reached. Seek them, explain your need. In a few short years they will impart the needed schooling. They will arm you with the sacred symbol. Then you may come afresh."

"Once I get back down there I'm a dead duck! There'll be bulls and rats on my tail. Fat chance I'd find even looking for teachers, let alone studying! Suppose I say I won't go back? What then?"

"Nothing from us—no violence. But in your changed form you would find Khoire uncomfortable—at least those parts for which you have asserted a preference. And, willing or not, you would gravitate to those environs most becoming to you—the realms of the Less-than-men!

"You deem Khoire a heaven? And so in part it is. But was there not a snake in your legend of a paradise? Rather than dwell one moment in the regions of the Less-than-men I would live out an eternity in a torture-chamber of your Inquisitions!"

"Look, Mister Patur—you folks up here are the real thing, so it follows you'll give a guy a fighting chance. You must have some kind of court of appeal, something higher up that'll give me a listen and maybe change the verdict! There never was a law without a loophole."

Patur said astringently, "It is true, you

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may appeal. And true also that a law may be circumvented. But I warn you—under the jurisdiction of Khoire you may be punished for your presumption!"

Hibbert remembered fairy tales in which mortals were granted their dearest wishes—but always in a form which more than voided them.

Burks almost sang! "Bring on the punishments! I'll take what's coming. I don't care what it is—even if I have to take the place of the blue flamingo!"

Patur started, dropping the necklace.

"You would do even so much? Think, man—think before committing your answer!"

Burks' head was high, and Hibbert was abashed by and envious of such sovereign resolve. "That? Why, it would be a snap!"

"Yet—were you the flamingo's substitute, you would not be in Khoire. Remember that."

"So what? At least I'd be on its doorstep, and serving your Great Ones, if only a little. What more could anyone want?"

Patur drew in his breath sharply, slightly lifted his hands as if beginning a benediction. All his aloofness had been mitigated by his warm approval. Again Hibbert was aware of Burks' towering, courageous manhood.

The oldster said, "I think—it can be arranged. Your making such transformation and leaving Khoire would be in accord with the rule. Never before has it been done in this way—yet it is not without the limits of the Law!"

Burks covered his eyes with a shaking hand. Hibbert heard his whisper.

"Who says you have to die to get to heaven!"

THE manservant caught the hanging web, pulled it effortlessly from its place in air, rolled it into a compact ball no larger than a crumpled handkerchief. He dropped it into the cube over which he presided. The maidservant took the mask to her box and packed it.

Burks lowered his hands, his face still glowing. "When—when will you book me for a hearing?"

"Immediately," Patur replied. "Yet it were better that you weighed fully the enormity of your desire. I advise you to go with your friends to the quarters prepared for you. Ponder your decision from many viewpoints. You have requested martyrdom! Do not forget—Khoire's decisions are irrevocable!"

Burks laughed shakily. Carlotta jumped up and strode vehemently to within arm's length of the greybeard.

"You got Burks comin' an' goin'—but not me! That stuff about us turnin' into plants is pure baloney. Even if could be true, like Santy Clause, I still ain't scared! We don't like it here, an' we're just as glad to light out as you are to get us out. You just tell them there lookouts of yours to open the door to downstairs pronto."

Burks' jubilation vanished. Every line of him was hostile. Before he could speak, Scarlatti growled.

"Can it, Carlotta!"

"I—huh?" She turned.

"I said—quit beatin' your chops!" He arose, gripped her arm and pulled her away from Patur. "Don't give her no mind, Mister—she flies off the handle easy-like. So you want us to park ourselves in rooms you picked out for us? Sure, sure. Lead us to 'em!"

Maybe Scarlatti's abrupt complacence had deceived Patur and Burks—but certainly not Hibbert. The giant never departed from his picked path unless it was to his advantage. Hibbert felt for the gun. Its touch reassured him.

Patur said, singling out Burks, "Since this man goes from you now in search of higher justice—bid him farewell. It may be that you will not meet again. Or, meeting, not know him. Nor he you."

Hibbert took Burks' hand, gripped it strongly, regretfully.

"Bygones are bygones, Burks. I'm not interested in what you've done, but what you are now. I wish I were more like you!"

"So long, kid—and save your breath on the compliments. I hope we don't meet again—and I hope, if you really think I'm a good egg, you see it the same way. Because it'll mean I've got my wish and can stay around here! And as for you, if anything happens to you, it won't be much. When you get back down below why don't you take Patur's advice and hunt up some of those secret societies he talked about? Then you can come back."

He slapped Hibbert perfunctorily on the back, gave his hand to Scarlatti. "Stay on the beam, Frank. Do as you're told and you'll be all right. You've got to find out now or never that some things are bigger than yourself!"

Carlotta stood undecided. Burks offered

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her his hand; she hesitated, took her own from its haven under the giant's arm; touched his reluctantly.

"I know you don't care for me and never have," Burks said. "Frank was always top man as far as you've been concerned. But forget it now and wish me luck."

Carlotta had a catch in her voice despite all its spurious sarcasm. "If you wasn't always such a cocky weasel I guess maybe I could of liked you more."

Hastily she turned from him. And Hibbert understood that she had given the highest compliment possible.

Patur went to Burks, stood an instant gazing deeply into his eyes. Then he reached up and patted the man on the shoulder. He said gravely, paternally, "Go now to those higher powers who will hear your case. And"—his hand lingered—"my kindest thoughts accompany you, whatever happens!"

He stepped back. Without a backward glance Burks followed a guide in blue. The door swung ponderously shut behind him.

Patur sighed. "Carlotta, Hibbert, Scarlatti—follow this person to the quarters prepared for you. Wait there. All your needs will be attended. Later I shall visit you."

He returned Hibbert's bow, smiled at Carlotta's puzzled look which strayed questioningly from him to the giant, bent his head in reply to Scarlatti's blunt goodbye.

The other blue-robe conducted them from the chamber. Hibbert heard the distant roar of a mighty gong, looked back and saw Patur facing the black window. The oldster's arms were raised as if greeting something which looked inside. Greeting, Hibbert wondered, with an unconquerable feeling of awe, whom—or what!

CHAPTER IX

The Giant's Plan

CARLOTTA whispered her reproach.

"Why'd you cut me off like you did? I'd 'a' made him let us go if you'd let me at him long enough!"

The giant, eyes shifting craftily from Hibbert to the blue-robe, said, "Zip the lip an' do like you're told." And, as her perplexed look persisted, "Keep your shirt on—want me to let the cat out of the bag, you dumb Judy?"

She was satisfied and sneered at Hibbert. They were traversing the Hall of Blackness by which they had come to Patur's chamber from the room of the Fu dogs and frame. But now they made many more of the grotesque weaving movements than before, though always they seemed to be walking straight ahead.

Though there was no sensation of pressure against the body, there was a psychic certainty that they breasted some furious current. Hibbert, recalling Patur's pictures on that cobweb screen, which had pulsed like an enormous thistledown heart, decided that, in harmony with the alien gravity of Khoire, they were walking head-downward or at least up some vertical plane.

Without warning a door arose before them, glowing brassy yellow as had the others—a large triangle reflected by the mirrored floor to diamond shape. The blue-robe swung it open, courteously standing aside that they might precede him.

[*Turn page*]

Now She Shops "Cash and Carry"

Without Painful Backache

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 50 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills. *(Adv.)*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He followed them in and, much after the manner of a hotel bellhop, hastened to make last-minute adjustments—patting a perfectly rounded sofa-cushion into the same perfect rondure, straightening a chair unnecessarily, fussily lifting a vase from its position and setting it back exactly as he had found it.

The blue-robe, having finished his ministrations, bowed and went outside. At once Scarlatti swept a forearm under Hibbert's chin, sweeping him off his feet. His other hand ripped into Hibbert's shirt, caught the gun. He dropped Hibbert, drew back to await the youngster's attack.

"You didn't know I seen you snitch this out of Burks' belt, huh? I don't miss no tricks! So don't start nothin', see?"

Since any reply was superfluous Hibbert shrugged and sauntered away. He was so positive of the doom impending upon them that it mattered little to him if the giant were in command of an arsenal.

Carlotta had begun exploration of the apartment. The powers of Khoire were indeed considerate, with an eye for their visitors' contentment. They had slavishly duplicated the last word in interior decoration in Hibbert's sphere—though with a decor restricted to an enterprising advertiser.

It was a suite of several bedrooms, living and dining rooms, a kitchen and baths. Carlotta rapturously plumped herself down on the sofas, chairs and beds, testing their softness. She cried her delight at a vanity table littered with flasks of perfume and feminine appurtenances. She clapped blissful hands at sight of a closetful of colorful wrap-arounds in assorted sizes and hues.

Typically she did not wait for the men to leave, nor refresh herself with a bath. She ripped one after another of the gowns from their hangers, holding them against herself for size. She found one of royal purple embroidered with golden stars which suited her, stripped off her soiled and tattered dress, kicked it in a corner and hastened into the robe.

She scurried to the mirror and began improving on Nature's somewhat dubious handiwork by dipping into cosmetic jars.

Scarlatti ambled to the kitchen, looked unhappy because it contained no refrigerator. He found a bowl of what was possibly fruit, but shook his head over it. He went to the living-room and took cigarettes from a humidor. Probably with an eye to the future he crammed a handful into a pocket. He lit one, settled back on a divan to enjoy it—spat disgustedly, stared at its glowing tip and flung it away. While Hibbert retrieved the smouldering butt from the deep-piled rug the big man dug into a pocket and cast out the cigarettes he had stored there.

"Worse'n reefers!" he grumbled.

HIBBERT straightened to confront the giant's brooding scrutiny. "Something wrong?"

"Nah. But just when's this here changin' business goin' to start?" Scarlatti gestured heavily. "Patur's just whistlin' 'til he can think up somethin' else to buffalo us. But he don't crimp me none."

"You're planning something!"

"If you can't figger the angle for yourself, don't 'spect me to draw you a picture. It's ev-rybody for hisself from now on."

That, at least, was heartening.

Scarlatti ruminated, "I sure crossed up the old geezer! He thought I'd be burned up, showin' off my thoughts in front of you—'fraid you'd laugh! I had my plans all fixed, an' I know if I put that there mask on, he'd get wise to what was cookin'. I ain't punchy like Burks thinks."

He slumped, supremely comfortable, almost reclining. "Burks wantin' to trot off to his Bigger-than-the-rest-of-us was more'n I hoped for—it cinches ev-rythin'! I'm glad he's gone—he always muscled the show anyhow. An' now I run it my own way!"

His brows shot up in surprise. He was looking past Hibbert to the door. Carlotta had finished her toilette and was lounging against the door-frame in the approved fashion-mannequin style, awaiting their admiration. All her weight was thrown on one leg. The other sagged seemingly broken. One hand clutched the woodwork in the vicinity of her bent knee; the other was flung far up above a head, dreamily lolling, all its somnolence sharply contradicted by Carlotta's keen and demanding stare.

For a few seconds the giant studied her, then slapped his thigh and guffawed. She straightened with a snap.

She shouted, "What do you mean snickerin' when I dolled myself all up, just for you" She whirled suspiciously on Hibbert. "I seen myself in the mirror—I guess I know how I look Good!"

"You maybe seen yourself in the mirror," Scarlatti chuckled, as irately she bore down upon him, "but you wasn't standin' then like

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you was at the doorway. You in that there get-up with a fried-egg look on your puss!" He folded up with laughter.

She waited for his mirth to ebb, stood with arms severely folded, one foot tapping. She had, Hibbert noticed with a pinching sniff of his nostrils, liberally distributed a mixture of the many perfumes about her person. Their combined redolence suggested an immense and decaying chrysthanthemum.

"Aw, you don't know class when you see it!" she snapped. Scarlatti mollified her with the remark that, in all likelihood, she had improved her worth to the Oldest Profession. She was pleased and bent to kiss him.

There was a faint clang from the door. Hibbert would have opened it save that Scarlatti leaped from the divan—perhaps equally in capacity of leader and to escape Carlotta's attentions—and shouldered him aside. Hand on gun, he swung the portal ajar—goggled and threw it wide.

"Well, well!" he cooed, dropping his hand from his gun. And, spitefully, to Carlotta, "So I don't know class when I see it, huh? Well, get a load of this!"

Out in the dark corridor, bright against its blackness as the highlight which glitters on a plane of jet, a girl was waiting, and not alone—but Hibbert had no eyes just then for her companions.

She was more lovely than the maiden which Drobreyna Kulanich shaped from pink dawn-cloud, the blue of the sky and the gold of the rising sun; lovelier yet than the jewel-princess of the kobolds whose lure distracts men from the theft of treasure to death. She was too beautiful even for dreams! And if, in Hibbert's world, it was not uncommon for men to fall in love at first sight—here in Khoire he had good reason for it.

One glance at this girl told Hibbert more concerning her character than he could have learned in years' acquaintance with a girl of his own sphere. And thus, quite naturally, he fell deeply, irretrievably, in love. She was the ideal all men seek in their women—beauty and purity in body and soul alike!

NEXT ISSUE

ONE OF THREE

A Novel

By WESLEY LONG

PLUS OTHER STORIES

CHAPTER X

Mareth of Khoire

SHE was tall, yet seemed taller because of exquisite proportions—her slender, high-breasted body like that slim snow-and-silver birch sapling which Gluskap set as sentinel over his forest kingdom. She seemed a white-birch dryad!

Like two great emeralds her oblique eyes were mounted in the darkness of her long and sweeping lashes as though in settings of tarnished silver. Over them in graceful flight, winged her black brows to her temples. For mouth she had the soft, velvety bud of some large crimson flower waiting to unfold at the kiss of the sun. And her hair was morning light swept up from her brow in a golden casque.

She wore a garment long and flowing of incredibly fine and changeable silk, whose subdued colors ran one into the other like the hues of the flickering aurora. So fine was its milkweed texture that it cleaved to her like wet chiffon, revealing her exquisite body.

She wore fingerless gloves like the patterns of Victoria's day—of lustrous brocade they flared out in wide cuffs which curved outward like the end-beams of the dragon pagodas; they were stiff with jewels. And on thumb and forefinger of both hands were golden nail-guards. They accentuated a taint of the Oriental which made of her a Manchu *shen-kuei* princess.

The emerald eyes studied the three who received her. She said, her voice the chime of mellow bells, "I am Mareth of Qsin in Khoire. May I enter?"

Woman-like, Carlotta made the most of the situation. She swept regally past the giant, firmly planting one hand on his chest as she passed him and thrusting him forcefully out of her way.

She offered that hand to Mareth, rough-hewn digits of drab brown stone, in strong contrast to those tapering ones like slim and pointed petals. She answered in a treble trill which Hibbert supposed was her company-voice.

"I'm Carlotta Dunfree—an' sure pleased to meet you!"

Mareth regarded the none-too-clean hand

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gravely, then touched it in salute. Carlotta lifted it to the girl's back and catapulted her into the room. She indicated Scarlatti.

"This is Frank, my guy. Some day we're gettin' spliced." She did not sound too hopeful on that score, however. "An' him? Oh, he's Hibbert, just somebody we picked up. I don't know his first handle."

She turned back to the door, lifted her hands in dismay both politely simulated and startledly sincere. Like Hibbert, until that moment her eyes had been only for the girl. Now, on beholding Mareth's associates, she gulped.

"An—an' who're these delightful people, huh?"

Mareth beckoned them in. Hibbert did not turn to scan them. He was too preoccupied with gathering further details of Mareth to store among his memories. She noticed his preoccupation with her and laughed—the sound was companioned by flowing fire. Nevertheless her voice made no light as she introduced her friends—and singular ones they were!

"Here is N'gina—and here, Kikoda—from the World-under-men."

TINY they were, neither above four feet in height. N'gina was a lushly plump damsel of indefinite age, her skin as translucently green as if, carved in nephrite by some merry artisan, she had been endowed with life—the Galatea of a buffoonish Pygmalion. She wore her hair in slavish imitation of Mareth. Her costume consisted of sprays of aquatic weed draped, if not becomingly, at least with an aim toward modesty.

Kikoda reminded Hibbert equally of a white cat and a blind newt—for he was eyeless, his nose negligible, his mouth a lipless gash in his bottom-heavy face. He was covered with short chalk-white fur even to his large and pointed ears, fur of which he seemed inordinately proud, since at that moment he ceased his fatuous grinning and angled his head to lick one shoulder smooth. Normally proportioned from his hips upward, his lower body was dwarfed. Thickset, teddy-bearish, he would have made a delightful child's toy.

"My, what screwy—what strange-lookin' folks!" Carlotta cooed uncertainly. "Well, won't you all just come on right in an' put the bodies down anywhere?" And, hostess to the hilt, "I'll just shake into the kitchen an' mix you up a snort—I mean, see if there's anythin' I can dig up for you."

Beaming hospitably, waving one hand coyly, she strode from the room.

Mareth chose a chair, nodded to N'gina to take another. The green woman left wet footprints on the rug as if she had just emerged from the bath and been hasty with the towel. Kikoda, despite his lack of eyes, had no difficulty in selecting a seat. Perhaps, Hibbert thought, like a mole or a bat, he was guided by supersonic hearing.

Mareth clasped her hands on her knees. She spoke and, like Patur's, her lips barely moved. It reminded Hibbert disconcertingly of ventriloquism but was probably the Khoirean courtesy of restraint.

"I was but passing by with N'gina and Kikoda, on our way to the gate of their world. They have been making pilgrimage to the Great Ones!"

She made the reverent sign. "As ever, I thought to pay my respects to dear Patur and he mentioned your arrival. And though I have heard much of those who have come from the World of the Forefathers—though I have seen them in our archives as picture and memory—I was curious, for never had I met them in the flesh. So I came to behold you—and if it is rude I beg your forgiveness!"

N'gina babbled the sound of running water, venting light like rainbow bubbles.

Mareth said, "N'gina was eager as I. Aware of humans in her homeland, never has she seen one—only been conscious of them, as intuition tells us in a dark room that we are not alone."

Now the dwarf murmured in a feline purr.

Mareth added, "Kikoda says the same."

She looked up at the looming Scarlatti. He had not budged from the spot in which Carlotta had shoved him. She scanned Hibbert, who unconsciously had been inching toward her.

"But you do not approach," she said. "Is it that you fear me?" For all the light on her lips when she had laughed, still there was none when she spoke.

Scarlatti shook himself as if awakening from heavy sleep. He lumbered over to her. Hibbert, thrilling with jealousy—for in his soul he possessed this woman already—elbowed the giant a little aside.

She marvelled, "And so you are men! My cousins—for we of Khoire were not unlike you, long ago?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Hibbert sensed that she was a little displeased by them. He observed the specter of a frown haunting her brow—as even today some genealogically-minded young blueblood, having traced his ancestry back through riches and warrior kings, discovers a pauper or thief amongst his forebears.

"Are we as disappointing as all that?" he asked, a trifle piqued.

She laughed sheepishly, and Hibbert knew how a destitute man may resent the charity of a benefactress.

"But I am rude indeed. Forgive me!" She arose, raiment fluttering. "I would not offend you! Rather I would leave."

Hibbert thrust out a hand. "No, please—stay! You could never offend—me!"

The emerald eyes lingered for a second on his, darkened. "You are bold! I hardly thought it the way of your people to be so exceedingly forthright."

"You guessed my thought?" he asked. She nodded. "But if you guessed it surely you understood the worlds of respect behind it! And so it was I who offended—not you."

"Even so," she agreed, but smilingly. "Thus we have evened the score of our errors. And perhaps in the future it were well we overlooked all such little differences—for we are foreigners one to the other and our usages unlike."

She took the chair again.

Hibbert said, "Whenever I talk to you, my words can be seen as light but none of yours are! Why is that?"

"Because," she said from lips firmly set, however sweet their curve, "you of the lower world use voice for communication while we in Khoire use the mind."

"You mean—telepathy?"

She said: "Yes. In Khoire, where conditions favor it, we find it commonplace enough! But you below regard it as unusual among yourselves, notwithstanding its suspected potentialities."

He remembered reading of the Rhine experiments at Duke University. He asked, "And can you hear whatever I'm thinking?" He heard Scarlatti's grunt of surprise, saw the giant's body stiffen. Were the big man's plans known then to Patur and Mareth, fast as he formed them?

HER laugh soothed the giant. She said, "A little I can grasp of your thoughts but only piecemeal fragments which cannot be puzzled into an intelligible whole. They seem but the idle mouthings of infants!"

"But you've been talking—I mean, thinking—in English!"

"You err! I speak in pictures, in remembered sensations, indeed in emotions! Your mind, receiving them, associates them with your words for them, thereby translating them into—what have you called it?—English!"

The giant was staring at Mareth with the leering cupidity of a thief confronted by easily portable treasure. Again Hibbert felt jealousy and was conjuring up angry words when Carlotta entered with the tray of fruit and saved him the trouble. She noted the giant's expression and was as angered as Hibbert.

"Hey, you—give me a hand!" she called out sharply.

His eyes hungry on Mareth, he said cursorily over a shoulder, "You ain't gimpy!"

She forgot social amenities. She snapped, "Don't you make no eyes at no strange woman—if you want to keep 'em in your head!" She cast the tray with a thump on the nearest table. The fruits bounced down on the rug. Kikoda helpfully scrambled to their rescue.

"What's this you're dishin' me—the runaround?" And to Mareth, her sense of etiquette reviving: "It's nothin' really, dearie—he just ain't got no manners." Unceremoniously she hauled him back. "But he's a good guy all the same."

Reluctantly the giant permitted her to drag him to a sofa, but his eyes held to Mareth during the procedure. Carlotta seated herself beside him, the springs shrieking protest at her hearty thud on them. She held one of Scarlatti's hands firmly in her own.

"You're hitched, or somethin'?" she asked brightly, hopefully.

Hibbert's heart paused in its beating, awaiting Mareth's answer. He had not thought that she could be married! But she replied demurely.

"Oh, no—love has not yet come to me."

It had, Hibbert thought, but she did not know it. And he almost envied Burks, who had been given the half-promise of service to Khoire. Why, Hibbert himself would gladly become the blue flamingo if it meant permanent entry into Khoire at some future date with Mareth awaiting him!

"Oh, it ain't, huh," Carlotta said numbly with an apprehensive side-glance at the giant. She changed her portent to pity. "I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mean—you'd think a girl with your looks could snag on to some john who'd love you like crazy, like"—her voice was at once threat and warning and boast— "like Frank here loves me!" Leaning, she planted a moist kiss on his lips.

He jerked irately away, snatched his hand from her hold and scrubbed his slack mouth. "Lay off!" But he smiled indulgently for Mareth. *"Women!"* he said, as if that explained everything. Then as if it had explained too much—for it was patent that he was smitten by Mareth's charms, "That is, some women!"

IT HAD gone far enough for Carlotta. She closed the topic.

"Your little pal, there—the green one—I guess maybe she ain't no mermaid."

"Mermaid?" Mareth seemed to search her mind for the term. "Oh! Why yes. I believe she is one—but a true one, not the false picture your people have created. She is an Undine."

"Well, I'm glad she's true," Carlotta commented ambiguously. "An' tell me, what's a undine?"

Mareth cogitated—rather prettily, Hibbert thought, having observed the truth of Oscar Wilde's statement that people generally, when thinking, become all eyes or nose or forehead.

He was still standing—Carlotta took advantage of Mareth's introspection to wave him urgently to a seat. He settled that matter more to his liking than hers by simply folding himself at Mareth's feet, resting tailor-fashion with crossed legs.

N'gina, conscious that the conversation concerned herself, self-consciously smoothed her wet green hair, patted the leaves which clothed her and essayed a smile which brought algae-green teeth into notice.

Scarlatti responded to this with a startled grunt.

"An undine," Mareth said finally. "But I fear to tell you what one is! It would consume considerable time and probably weary not only you, but these little ones."

Carlotta saw a chance for swift but civil dismissal which would remove this temptation from Scarlatti's reach.

"Yeah, I guess we are all kind of shot to pieces. We been on the go all day. Maybe you'll mosey 'round some other time an' tell us!"

She stood up, offering her hand to Mareth, who, somewhat taken aback, arose.

"It's been just peachy meetin' you, Miss." She gleamed with catty triumph. "I didn't get the name now, did I?"

"Mareth of Qsin in Khoire," the girl said serenely.

Hibbert jumped to his feet. "Carlotta, that wasn't very nice. You heard her the first time! And, Mareth, I'm not a bit weary. I'd love to hear what an undine is!" Although of course he already knew from his reading. "Won't you stay and tell me?"

She regarded him uncertainly. "But your comrades. . . ."

Carlotta violently pulled at Scarlatti. "Frank, darlin'," she remarked, more to speed the parting guest than for the giant's benefit, "if you don't lie down you'll get sick. You look like you been buried an' dug up!"

"Lie down my foot!" He stopped, frowned a little. Then, surprisingly cheerful, he allowed her to pull him erect. "Yeah, I am kind of fogged, all of a sudden." He turned to Mareth. "Don't let us bother you none, baby—Miss—I mean, Mareth. You an' the kid here just go on talkin' an' havin' fun an' maybe I'll look in on you later when I'm rested up."

He winked broadly, significantly.

"Then I shall remain," Mareth said. "We have but scant time here. We await the coming of Dweil. But should you return before my departure I will be most pleased. For there are so many things concerning your world of which I would ask you!"

Scarlatti winked again, shamelessly. "An' lots of stuff I can teach you, baby!" Huge as he was, Hibbert would gladly have strangled him—or at least have made the attempt. Carlotta, who was similarly murdering the giant in her heart if not in actuality, was yanking him toward the inner doorway. He waved archly. "Be seein' you!"

Hibbert half expected to hear one or the other shouting recrimination and abuse once both were out of sight. He listened, could catch only indistinguishable whispers—Scarlatti's voice, its vehemence dying away to a soothing murmur, lifting from coaxing to command.

The giant was at last confiding his plans to Carlotta—and had those schemes expanded to include Mareth? Jealous as he was of Scarlatti's unspoken but flagrant attitude toward Mareth, he certainly preferred the giant to be present, where at least he could be watched.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER XI

The Finding of Khoire

"FIRST," Mareth said, "let me send away my little ones, for the story you would hear is no new one to them."

She turned to them. She made no sound but, as though she had spoken, they slipped from their chairs, nodded and made for the door. They left their marks behind them—the green maiden the wet print of her body on the upholstery, the dwarf a few white hairs clinging to the cloth.

Alone with Mareth, Hibbert took the floor at her feet, as before.

"You are comfortable?" she asked. "I have warned you—the tale is long."

"If it took forever, I wouldn't care—as long as it were you, telling it."

"You are—most gallant!"

He laughed. "I can't help it!"

She caught his thought. "What, you would love me? Me, Mareth of—"

"Of Qsin in Khoire," he finished for her. "It's no question of will I or won't I—be sure of that. I can't help myself! Why"—he gestured ineptly—"when a man sees the splendor of the rainbow or a shooting star can he help but look and love them?"

"But I am no rainbow, no meteor. I am a woman!"

He grinned. "Doesn't that make it all the more reasonable?"

She wriggled impatiently, her anger gathering. "You speak to me so—you who must be thrust from Khoire as a child is thrust from the conclave of its elders—you, untutored and without the Symbol! Unclean—whose body has yet to assume its true shape—and what evil guise may that be! You should look up to me as to a goddess."

"I do!" he caught her short. "But men have loved goddesses—and goddesses have loved men."

He reached up and caught her wrists. She pulled against him but he would not let her go. She glared, her emerald eyes ablaze, parted her lips to cry out her rage.

"Is it my fault if I am all you seem to think?" he said swiftly. "My fault that none below knows of Khoire—or, knowing, has revealed knowledge of it to me and given me the Sign of Entrance? You may be as high above me as a goddess but your antipathy is so unreasonable that it levels you to humanity. It's no blame of mine that I wasn't born into Khoire on your own plane of society!"

"You argue that it is not the dog's error which causes it to be born a dog and not a man," she said. "But who would mate with a dog? And have you not been shown that here in Khoire the situation is different?"

Her hands fell lax. The green fires waned. She asked, "What use to love me when, unmindful of your true guise, I cannot trust you. And, distrusting, not return your sentiment? For you and your comrades—at least until the Change which must surely seize you—I can feel at most only pity."

"As long as you feel anything at all I'm happy. For now that I've found you, Mareth, I'll be coming back. And, Change or no, sooner or later you'll love me."

"You are so certain! But what of the woman you left behind and to whom, it may be, you have said the same?"

"Of course I'm certain—if only because there never has been a girl until now to whom I could say it and mean it! The reason there was never such a girl is—you! I've waited all my life for you, though it wasn't until this minute that I realized why. And if you don't believe me, tell me—why hasn't some man up here tried to marry you? Or"—his heart was behaving strangely—"don't you recognize marriage as an institution?"

She laughed. "But certainly we recognize it! And many men have tried to gain my favor. Dweil. . . ." She sobered at the name.

"Who's Dweil?"

"A—friend. And oh, I love him! But as a friend only. Yet he has mentioned marriage." She fidgeted, gaze downcast.

"He's mentioned marriage," Hibbert said, "but you couldn't accept him because you were waiting for someone—you didn't know whom. Well—do you know now?"

"No, I do not! And speak no more of love. You have asked for a story! Well, I will tell it to you. Of who we once were, we people of Khoire—of why we came here—and why we still maintain the gateways to the many interlocked worlds, among which are yours and N'gina's."

SHE watched the play of her restless fingers.

"Long ago," she began, "and longer than

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

long ago—so far removed in time that the continents and seas of your world were not as now, men built great cities as splendid as any of today. It matters not what nor where the world. Cities of such ancient age that the dust into which they have crumbled has become but the dust of dust.

"All that your wise men of today are only beginning to learn they knew! Yet—knowledge is like fire. Aptly used it warms and protects. Mishandled by fools it scorches and slays."

Then she told of the pride in their accomplishments which turned members of the ancient races one against the other—of wars so terrible that all but a few perished, yet still the survivors fought one against the other.

IT WAS at that time, she said, that a band of thinkers, seeking to perfect defensive screens against the onslaught, discovered instead—Khoire. They knew, as is known now, that matter is composed of atoms, that each specific substance is determined according to the grouping of those atoms—even as the selfsame bricks may build palaces, hovels, roads and reservoirs, all according to an architect's plan.

"As alchemists," Mareth furthered, "they had long achieved what your scientists of the present are just beginning to discern and attempt—the altering of atomic patterns, the transmutation of one substance to another—making emendations in the plan of the Cosmic Architect.

"By so doing, they perceived that which is yet unknown to your scientists—that one atomic pattern may interlock with another, that what is the nucleus of one may be but part of the shell of another. And that thereby two substances may exist in the same place at the same time, unseen and unsuspected, providing that they are part of a third.

"Interlocked worlds!" she repeated. "The Cosmic Architect's plans were executed in many dimensions, not in the four with which your scientists conduct their fumbling investigations."

Having discovered Khoire, the explorers studied its forces, found that the radiation of thought in the new world was so powerful as to control the physical, and that therefore only progress could hold sway. Khoire was a world where the destructive mental image killed its maker before he could loose his hate on his fellow-beings—a world in which war was impossible!

They emigrated to Khoire, leaving the war-makers to destroy themselves in that world below, and destroy themselves they did. Their bombs—to which the present atom bombs were children's firecrackers—tipped the world on its axis and precipitated the Glacial Age. The great white cities were crushed to powder under the creeping ice. Those who escaped death reverted to savagery.

YET the people of Khoire looked down on the savages and pitied them—for were they not brothers?

They would have brought those uncouth survivors up into the new land save that, because the Change which overtook them, mentally unstable as they were, rendered them less than human.

"So we built the gates to your world," Mareth said, "and passed the ancient Law—that henceforth none might ascend to dwell in Khoire unless trained by the missionaries we sent below. And to make doubly certain—the newcomer must carry the Sacred Sign."

What the Sign was she did not say.

"Yet entrance is afforded to any seeking it, for we would give example and warning to the unwary and unwise. If any newcomer does not possess the requirements for admittance he must stay here until the Change proves his mettle, then return below. Even, my dear Hibbert, as you must."

"Sages we sent you—prophets and law-givers still remembered and, in some cases, still honored among your kind—though perhaps it is more apt to name them dishonored, so greatly have you distorted their pronouncements. For in your world the body must ever rule the mind—such is its nature. And therefore, there must ever be hatred and killing.

"Yours is a world of brutes who deem themselves wise in the brute strength of violence. Suicides, proudly pleased with their handiwork as they admire the shining knives they forge for the cutting of their own throats! Madmen!"

The intense blaze of her green eyes scorched him.

"And you would love me, *you!* Think you I would fare below with you—even though the Change not harm you—to a world of insanity and monsters?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER XII

The Red Tower

HE HAD no answer.

She said, "Therefore we of Khoire weary of you. We think of abandoning you wholly. Let you slaughter yourselves! For you cannot see that all men are brothers, and that he who slays his mother's son slays himself. Yet among our Great Ones are those who plead that we postpone our abandonment, saying that it is not yet too late for hope." And this time, mentioning those supreme beings, she showed her disfavor by omitting the reverent sign.

Uneasily he interposed. "Mareth, I wish you'd speak with your voice, rather than with your thought!"

"We employ our voices little here," she replied. "Such is the practise of the lesser beings whom we despise. You would have me talk by mouth because I seem strange to you—and such strangeness is barrier between us. But that is as I would have it!"

She waved him to silence as he would have demurred. "Now as to N'gina and those other clans, the sylphs and gnomes and salamanders, who dwell in one of the many worlds whose existence I have explained. If you think Khoire fantastic how much more incredible you would find their home!

"They are bodiless creatures in a world without substance—mere sentient entities—shadows of intelligence knowing neither pleasure nor pain. They can simulate the human form, though not human themselves, but in human guise they cannot handle material objects.

"So near the vibrational pitch of your world is theirs that, at times, the two momentarily coincide because of accidental fluctuations in the rate of vibration. And then these beings can be seen by those among you who are sensitive—either because born with extraordinary quickness of thought—remember that thought is a vibration—or sensitive because their perceptions are heightened by disease, or drugs or hypnotic influence.

"But these entities are seen as in delirium, or dreams, or trances—giving rise to superstitions of angel visitations and possession by devil and *genii locorum*."

"Fox-spirit, vampire, were-wolf, goblin and nymph," he mused. "Our legends of them go back to times immemorial. Yet daily we hear report of those myths being re-enacted—the reports promptly explained away with scientific jargo.. more outlandish than the events themselves."

She said, "If we abandon your tribes we can devote all our efforts to the aid of the other peoples. And they live in peace. Why should we not show them the path to the fullness of life which they seek? Let your mad warriors slay one another, down to the very last—leaving the fair green fields of your world empty and waiting for the non-humans who deserve them. Even now we give partially of our help, bridging the void between worlds. We teach them, immaterial as they are, to grasp and manipulate substance."

"The poltergeists—so that explains them!"

"Yes, those forces which wreak mischief with inanimate objects, and which your scientists explain away with laughable theories of heat expansion and seismic disturbances. . . ."

Then, "Enough! I have told what you sought to know. I came here in curiosity—for though knowing of your kind by the teachings of Khoire, never had I compared those teachings with concrete reality. But now I have seen you—and I know those teachings to be truth, and henceforth I will sympathise with Dweil's standpoint. He it was who conceived the idea of calling N'gina and Kikoda through the Silver Gate—that they might make homage to the Great Ones, incidentally reminding them of a race in need, and worthy of support."

DISDAINFULLY she surveyed him, gazed toward the inner rooms as though her vision, piercing the walls, took scornful note of the giant and Carlotta. She arose from her chair, her shimmering garments fluttering like opalescent smoke in a capricious draught.

"Now I must go—for Dweil knew not of my coming. And I would rather gain his side than have him fret at my absence, make inquiries and summon me."

Hibbert could not relinquish her with the Change and expulsion so imminent; he moved toward her, his hands held out hungrily.

"Mareth, don't go!"

Her green eyes softened, were sad. She

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pitied him! And his heart worshipped her while his body trembled with desire for her.

Without knowing that he moved, he took another step toward her—and another. Whatever the course of action which might have come from that instant of blind impulse, it festered stillborn as a clang from the doorway startled them both.

Scarlatti bounded forth, big hand at the gun in his belt. He flung open the door. Patur and a stranger waited in the blackness of the mirrored hall, as bright against the gloom as if limned with flaming brush on ebon panel.

Hibbert hated the stranger on sight—for he knew it was Dweil. A tall man, too perfect in line and color and mass not to be beautiful. Hibbert, picturing himself in contrast with this being, so eminently suitable as Mareth's mate, envied and loathed him. Yet, since outward appearance betokened state of mind, Dweil deserved worship rather than hate.

Mareth said, with little gladness, "Dweil! I was on my way to you."

He answered, sweeping eyes gem-clear and gem-cold over Hibbert and Scarlatti. "Had I known your intention of visiting these monsters, I would have prohibited it. N'gina and Kikoda informed me you were here."

"Forbidden or no, still I would have come. I have learned much—and in your favor."

She introduced them. Beyond a thin smile Dweil did not acknowledge the giant and the woman. He sent his eyes to Hibbert, the smile fading. It was a good sight to Hibbert. Dweil was worried. That must mean he looked upon Hibbert as a rival! In which case Mareth might not be so unattainable as she had claimed!

Unless — Hibbert's hopes splintered to shards—unless Dweil were merely evincing resentment at such overbearing presumption as until now he had never dreamed. Scarlatti's voice broke upon his crashing aspirations and his deferential air did not for an instant deceive Hibbert.

"Well, well, if it ain't Mister Patur! Just who I wanted to see! I was talkin' about you to Carlotta—wasn't I, baby? An' I kind of got to stewin' about my old pal Burks. I thought I'd like to ask you where's he gone to?" And, cautiously, "When's he comin' back?"

Patur beamed. "My tidings may please you! The Great Ones have judged him and returned him to this gate. They say he may earn the right to dwell in Khoire if he is willing and able to pay the price he named —and he is agreed. Even now he is within the red tower awaiting—nay, forcing upon himself—the necessary Change."

Scarlatti snorted at that word. To him it was empty threat. Yet his manner was still beguilingly affable as he queried, "Do you s'pose I could see him? An' Carlotta wants a look at him too—don't you, toots?"

She assented with such coy zeal that Hibbert was positive of something underhanded backing the request. Only a short while ago the giant had declared himself glad to be rid of his partner. Why now was he so anxious to contact him?

PATUR said, "You may see him, though he might find such interruption inconsiderate. Surely in his present state visitors would be unwelcome! His task is most difficult, being voluntary metamorphosis. The procedure foreign to him. Yet—you are our guests and he is your friend! It is within your rights."

"I thought so," Scarlatti muttered, lapsing to normality.

Surely, Hibbert thought, Mareth and Patur —yes, and Dweil—must recognise, with all their vaunted perception, Scarlatti's patent subterfuge! Or did their unlimited sincerity blind them to any concealed motive?

"If Burks would rather be alone, you'd better leave him that way!" he said hastily. And for emphasis, "You know what he's like when he's crossed!"

The giant glared, snarled. "Keep your nose where it b'longs, small-fry—if you don't want it busted!" And again with swift transition to meekness, "Can we see him now, Mister Patur? It's important."

Politely the greybeard bowed, motioned with a wide sweep of his hand for them to proceed. Dweil hung back.

"Mareth," he said. "You have seen enough of these strangers! Come with me to N'gina and Kikoda." She paused irresolutely, looking from him to the others and back again. She made her decision.

"Remain if so you will but I go with them! These three I have seen—why not the fourth? For he is the one of most interest among them, the one who does the bidding of our Great Ones!"

She sought Hibbert in a look which he caught. She flushed. He wondered if, after all, there were not a trace of vanity in her

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

character, if she were pleased with his worship despite her protestations to the contrary. She finished with the ghost of a promise, "His example might convince me that these folk are not so petty after all, are worth our efforts to better them."

"Be less arrogant in your tone, Dweil," Patur observed. "But for the accident of birth you might be in their place!"

Dweil did not answer—or perhaps answered all too tellingly by averting his face in distaste. Hibbert was glad that it was so easy to hate him! Scarlatti nudged the youngster.

"Get a move on, punk. You ain't stayin' behind." But Hibbert had entertained no notion of remaining when there was further promise of Mareth's company.

As Patur and Mareth led the way, and the giant and Carlotta fell in step with them, Hibbert warned, "You're cooking something, Scarlatti—what it is I don't know. But it won't work! This place is different."

"Diff'rent—*this* layout? Well, so am I diff-'rent—an' you better wise up to it!"

Despite the utter blackness of the corridor none of the party was in shadow. Each was as brilliantly illumined as if floodlights were turned upon him. It was, as Hibbert deduced, the effect of Khoire's special atmosphere, which bent light around corners.

Patur arrested their attention by raising his hand. Take care! Follow closely!"

Still moving forward, he stepped aside as though the floor were a transverse treadmill. He blacked out! Mareth carefully stepped into the selfsame spot. She too disappeared. Hibbert went next, then Scarlatti. Patur, Mareth and the giant flashed into sight again—but where was Carlotta? Thinly Hibbert heard her frightened yelp!

Patur reached through the blackness as if through the folds of a camouflaged curtain. His arm was hidden to the shoulder, apparently lopped off. He drew Carlotta in from nowhere. She was panting, goggling with bewilderment.

"Ev'rybody just whooshes out like they fell through the floor—an' then I see this here arm without no body hooked onto it—comin' at me like a snake! An' it yanks me in here! Only," she added puzzledly, "in here ain't no diff'rent from out there! I don't get it!"

She took firm hold of the giant.

"We cut through one of the dimensional warps," Patur explained, "thus in one step actually crossing miles of distance. I have shown you the honeycomb structure of Khoire, and apprised you of the fact that every surface of its cells is navigable. We but passed through the wall of one into another."

He pointed upward. Though they seemed to be in the same black passage as before Hibbert could no longer distinguish the apartment's yellow diamond of a door with Dweil before it. He tipped his head, saw that the oldster had indicated a tiny red spark—whether miles above them or just beyond reach, he could not determine. The murk was without landmark or boundary, therefore without distance.

"The red tower," Patur said.

IT WAS a tiny cube, like a die cut from a pigeonblood ruby, with triangular windows. Judging by the placement of its door it hung inverted. A fragment of bridge jutted from it, splintering off into space.

"We take another bypath. Proceed warily!" Patur admonished. He made another of those puzzling, yawing movements, simultaneously forward and sideways. He was blotted from sight as if the mind which dreamed him had been wakened. Single file they followed.

They emerged upon the middle of a wide and rubrous path—the bridge of that red tower they had seen so far above. It was without railing and transparent, a tissue-thin sheet of tinted glass.

From the red tower the bridge ran straight to another cubed structure, from which in turn rayed other spans linking a vast number of others. Similar in their squared shapes, they varied in size and color. Some glittered yellow as buttercups or as Ming ambers. Others were dusk-blue, peacock-green, orchid-pink and royal violet.

None were grouped with regard for structural unity. Their axes sloped in divergent directions. They were like a child's toy blocks scattered pell-mell on uneven ground, fallen to rest on end and edge and corner—as if, built on one plane like the edifices of the ordinary city, some giant force had twisted and crumpled that plane. From one to another the prismatic bridges arrowed, some horizontal as that on which Hibbert strode, others slanted like chutes or vertical like slim vanes of glass.

He heard soft but pervasive humming—as if, high above, a gigantic World-mother looked down and crooned a wordless lullaby. Mareth noted his turn of head as he looked

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about for the source of that lilt.

She said, "In your homeland it is daylight still—for that sound you hear is the light of your sun. Our calendar is much the same as yours. We also calculate our hours and days and years by the same sun and stars. See them we cannot. We gage their position in the heavens by the divergence in their tones—the filtering effect of your atmosphere according to their place in the sky."

She smiled. "If the Change is slow in taking you—then it may be that you will hear the symphonies wrought by the passing of clouds and of storms which obscure the sun! The delicate songs of the starlight—and the counterpoint of the moon as it wings across them!"

Away to one side, beyond the twisted web of the bridge-shackled towers, he glimpsed beads of light which swelled into enormous bubbles. Like those which he had glimpsed once before their highlights were curiously suggestive of human shapes—as if indeed people were prisoned within them.

From the doors of the towers beams of sapphire light shot forth. The glinting orbs rode on those beams as the moon treads its path on the waters! They skimmed tower and span, passed down the rays into the doorways like bees homing to hives.

"Our vehicles," Mareth said.

CHAPTER XIII

Ruse

AND now they had entered the red tower, were pausing at a brazen door on which Patur was rapping considerately. There was no response from within. The oldster temporised. He said, "I have counseled against your seeing him. It were well that we turned back."

"I got to see him!" Scarlatti insisted breathlessly. He prodded Carlotta.

"Yeah, me too!" she said.

Still Patur faltered. The giant took matters into his own hands, pushed the door open.

They looked into what seemed rosy mist. Centered in the blur, apparently afloat in the dull-hued heart of it, was Burks! But he was not as Hibbert remembered him. He was naked—"That nothing on his person remind him of past life and intrude upon his purpose," Patur explained.

He was curled in a compact huddle, like a sleeping kitten or an embryo chick in its shell. He faced them, his eyes bored into them—but he gave no sign of recognition nor even of seeing them. His skin was not healthy tan but grey, the mingling of blue-white and bistre-white which is the hue of dead flesh.

In the interval since he had bidden them farewell, little more than two hours ago, he had suffered a well-nigh incredible loss of weight. His bones protruded sharply; in his silence and huddled gauntness he was like one of those mummies unearthed from the Arizona pueblos.

But he was not dead! The curving parallels of his ribs lifted and lowered with the spastic twinges of his breath. And though his eyes showed no response at sight of his visitors they were not filmed!

Carlotta made an involuntary sound which was mixture of groan and wail. She pressed herself forcefully against the giant as if seeking to hide by blending with him. His hand tightened on the butt of his gun. Mareth was unperturbed—indeed, admiring. And Patur beamed, frankly pleased.

Scarlatti impatiently pushed Carlotta from him—immediately she thrust herself back. He cried, "Burks, can you hear me?"

The seamed lips stirred, the voice-fire wan and flickering. "Sure, Frank, I hear you. I might have known you'd stick your nose in. What's eating you now? If I want to be a flamingo, I've got to think and feel like one. I wish I'd studied them when I had the chance!"

Scarlatti passed a hand over his brow, dashed off the sweat it gathered. Hibbert read his thought—that Burks was insane, for however could a man become a bird, much less will himself into that form?

He said, "Yeah—but why a flamingo, Burks? Why not somethin' with class?"

A dry rattle of laughter crackled from the folded figure, its radiant equivalent like crumpled metal-foil dissolving.

"Because when a flamingo flies up high above that pool in the swamps its voice is pitched so that it can be heard—or maybe I'd better say seen—here in Khoire."

The giant demurred, "Well, you could still stay a man, couldn't you—an' make connections with a fire-siren?"

"You forget the Law. We have to under-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

go the Change! I'd rather risk becoming a blue flamingo than something worse! And the Great Ones think it's a good test. If I want to come back here badly enough to turn into a bird the deal's on! So here goes!

"I wish you could have been with me before those Great Ones, Frank. Something happens inside of you—what we felt of them from Patur's pictures was only a weak reflection. It straightens you out. You learn just how little you are after all, in the pattern of Life.

"It would have done you, especially, a world of good. I'm sorry for you, Frank. Sorry you haven't got this chance I have—and sorrier still you wouldn't want it even if you had it! But that's all over now—any interest I may have had in you. You're on your own."

HE TWITCHED as though within him some hand were tugging on his muscles, an idiot's hand jerking the strings of an unfortunate marionette. Over his bared skin, grey shadows of steely iridescence ran and vanished, like the marks of a breeze when it crosses a placid pool.

Skin lumped with goose-flesh as if the crazed hand inside him now were thrusting blunt needles outward to the surface. His hair, gone lackluster and drab, thickened to something like quills, slipped back to threads.

A pinfeather burst from his side with a little pop. It fluffed out with down; furled and slipped back within him. He arched his neck backward, his head held high—and it seemed his throat was longer. He bent his arms at the wrists and elbows like folded wings. He crouched on tiptoes as he floated, his knees pressing against his ribs—birdlike in pose, his visitors forgotten.

His mouth fell open. His gums protruded in flat crescents like the deliberately malformed lips of the Ubangis. Through them shot white splinters of bone which yellowed as they lengthened into something not quite approximating a bird's hooked beak.

Mareth and Patur looked on with the mirrored pride of accomplishment. But Carlotta's face greyed—and not in sympathy with that of Burks! She whipped her hand to her mouth and reeled, choking into the hall, howled for Scarlatti.

The giant stood his ground despite his trembling knees. For some reason he had insisted on seeing Burks. Now he must produce that reason or, were it a secret one, substitute an excuse to justify himself in Patur's eyes.

He called, voice shaking, "Well, what'll I tell the boys downstairs about all this, Burks?"

Hibbert doubted that the boys—by whom the giant probably meant his and Burks' quondam associates—would question Scarlatti concerning Burks' fate should he come in contact with them. Still it was a valid enough query.

Only an unintelligible sputter came from the thing which was no longer a man, yet still not a bird.

Scarlatti said triumphantly, "Guess he's too played out to tell me!" And repressing the shudder which coursed him: "Tha's bad, 'cause if the boys figger I maybe rubbed him out—they'll put the squeeze on me."

His mission accomplished, he turned, went out to Carlotta. She was leaning weakly against the wall, breathing in sobs but dry-eyed. She flung her arms around him; commendingly he patted her shoulders. Hibbert followed. As Mareth and Patur came forth, he heard Scarlatti's whispered exhortation:

"We gone this far without no hitch. Don't crack up now." Then to Patur, who was closing the door on Burks gently, almost reverently, "Look, Mister Patur—I been feelin' like a heel 'cause I ain't looked through the crystal gimmick what lets you read my mind. So I want to do it now."

"Oh, but there is no need" Patur answered. "I know you well from the images the others gave of you."

Scarlatti looked evilly on them all and also in the general direction of Burks. He sought to mask the vengeful frustration with an ingratiating smile—as out of place on his rugged countenance as a rabbit in a wolf-pack.

He changed his tune, and Hibbert knew it was deceit, whatever Patur and Mareth might think it.

"Yeah, but what I got to show you is somethin' nobody knows about—only me! An' maybe it's somethin' your bosses ought to have their fingers on—but if I tried sayin' it in words, it wouldn't make no sense."

"Very well," Patur said, "we go with all speed to where the mask is kept." And the giant and Carlotta shared a glance of mutual, smug satisfaction.

Patur guided them out on the bridge-cen-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ter, where they made that strange and aberrant alignment with the point in the blackness where, on high, Burks' tower shone reversed and in miniature.

Patur said, abruptly, "Mareth, should you not return to Dweil?"

"Let Dweil nurse his patience!" she said. "I would see this marvel which the mask is to reveal."

THEIR next move brought them to the green-walled chamber wherein were the red cubes containing the crystal mask and the cobweb screen on which its pictures were thrown.

Patur went to it. Scarlatti stalked to the right-hand cube, said, "I guess the mask's in this one, ain't it?"

Patur lifted a hand of protest. Nevertheless Scarlatti fingered the upper edges of the block, seeking the secret spring which would fling back its lid, all the while covering his urgency with his babbling.

"Maybe you think I'm bein' disrespectful—but I'm in one big rush, you see, on account of I'm scared there ain't goin' to be no time to show you—before the Change business gets me." He knifed a fingernail around the block in search of a crack, found none and cursed. "Carlotta, hustle over here an' give me your shiv—"

From the door a gong clashed faintly. Carlotta halted at the sound. Patur's two servants, the man and woman whom at first sight Hibbert had thought automatons, flowed forward. So smoothly did they advance that had Hibbert not seen the swing of their legs in lengthy stride, he would have thought they slid on runners. Carlotta murmured a lost little bleat. The giant did not hear her.

The manservant took his post on Patur's left. The woman would have slipped into her place at the right-hand cube save that Scarlatti was still busied with it. He became aware of her, went tense for a startled moment—she was evidently a factor on which he had not reckoned—then, making sudden decision, he stepped from her way with a swift, sardonic bow.

She eyed him briefly, wonderingly, as she slipped into the vacated spot—as a naturalist intent on the doings of one species will take sidelong look at the obtrusive antics of another.

Patur nodded to her. She swung back the cube's lid, bent and took forth the mask. Her companion meanwhile had raised the cover of his own cube and produced the silken web. He flung it in the air before Patur. It unrolled, hung flat.

Scarlatti ignored the mask which the woman held out for him. He brushed past her back to the cube, gazed down into it, tugged on the wires which ran from it to the curve of crystal.

Then, ignoring Patur, whose brows were lifted in wonder, he marched to the man's cube, jerked on its filaments communicant with the web. Carlotta's hand was in the bosom of her gaudy robe, clutching the hilt of her knife. Whatever she and the giant had planned was coming into focus. Hibbert held himself in readiness for the surprise.

Anxiously she asked the giant: "You figgered what works 'em—do things still check?"

"Both of 'em—mask an' screen—are hooked up to some kind of transformers. But I get the drift, yeah. It won't be hard to rig up somethin' pretty like! Ev'rythin' checks."

Hibbert was reckoning all probable moves in Scarlatti's game. He must work his way close to Carlotta, until he could get behind her in one swift leap, wrest the knife from her and hold her before him as a shield from Scarlatti's gun. Even then, knowing the giant's hasty temper, he was not at all sure that the man would withhold fire.

He regretted his crippled leg which must make him very near Carlotta indeed before he could cover the remainder of the ground between her and himself by one abrupt jump. Once behind her, her knife in his hands, he would steer her in front of Mareth—and if in his rashness the giant shot Carlotta, Hibbert's own body would protect Mareth.

As for Patur—well, the servants would have to guard him—Hibbert could hardly command the welfare of a roomful of people!

He edged toward Carlotta as if shifting his weight from one foot to another. Her head swerved toward him, sharp-eyed. Her lips tightened. She had sensed his intention. For every inch he thought to gain on her she sidled another away. He paused, checkmated and angry. And so did she, not at all intimidated.

Patur signed to his woman-servant. She shook the mask at Scarlatti as a mother shakes a toy before her infant to attract his attention. Patur began, "You spoke of fearing that the Change would overtake you,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before you could reveal—"

Hibbert had resumed his stealthy pursuit of Carlotta, without making noticeable headway. Exasperated, he said, "Why so jumpy, Carlotta? Why can't you hold still?"

CHAPTER XIV

The Taking of Mareth

SCARLATTI wrenched the mask from the tirewoman. Patur started in surprise, then settled back, evidently attributing the giant's action to a mixture of nerves and zeal. Then he was as naive as Hibbert had hoped he was not!

The giant did not raise the mask to his face. Deliberately he jerked at its wires, snapping them. He stowed the shallow disc of crystal under his left arm and snatched out his gun, slipped it into his left hand.

At the same time, Hibbert sprang for Carlotta. She had anticipated him and was ready, her knife flashing down for him. Both Patur and Mareth craned forward. Yet, after the first shock of surprise, they remained calm in their places as if no danger could possibly threaten them.

Not that Hibbert had much opportunity just then for observing their reactions! He saw the descending flicker of Carlotta's swooping knife and folded in mid-leap, dropped just below the swing of her weapon flat on the floor—and most fortunately! Scarlatti swiveled, shooting from the hip. The bullet zinged over Hibbert's head, snipping at his hair.

Hibbert swept out an arm, caught Carlotta's ankle as she stooped for a second stroke. He pulled her over upon him, screening himself from Scarlatti's gun with her body. She aimed another knife-thrust at him as she fell but he writhed from its path.

Meanwhile Scarlatti had stuffed the last remnants of the web into his shirt, had parted its wires, caught up a length of the silken filaments and was speeding toward the struggling pair. Hibbert caught Carlotta's knife-hand, twisted the skin of her wrist. She gasped at the pain of it but did not relinquish the blade.

Over them the giant spraddled. He tore Carlotta clear, dropped and ground one knee into Hibbert's throat. He looped a wire over the hand by which Hibbert clung to Carlotta's wrist, caught Hibbert's other hand which was clawing the asphyxiating knee, wound wire around it.

He fastened the fetters with a half-hitch, paused in the making of another knot to plant a great paw on Carlotta's shoulder and throw her aside—for now that her knife was free she meant to drive it into her enemy, helpless or not. She sprawled backward.

Deftly Scarlatti finished the last knot, sprang up. Hibbert lay writhing an instant, wrenching against those thin threads binding his hands behind him. They held all too securely, cutting painfully into his skin.

Mareth's gown flashed about her like a puff of pallid flame. Her face displayed—delicately, as if it were dulled only by the faintest of shadows—a fusion of wonder, slight apprehension and patrician scorn!

Hastily Scarlatti sidled toward her, as a stalking coyote slinks on the lone and grazing steer. He barked to Carlotta, "Lift the kid up an' keep your shiv on him, case he gets cocky—but hurt one hair of him an' I'll massacre you! Get me?"

Mareth recoiled from him, retreating at a slant as though withdrawing into an invisible cranny. He lunged for her, blocked her diagonal drifting, dragged her close to him, her back against his tremendous chest. Furiously she cried out, beat futile hands on his arm implacably gripping her. His free hand still trained his gun on Patur.

Hibbert had rolled and scrambled to his feet. Carlotta nudged him toward the giant, stinging him into speed by a suggestive prod of her knife. Patur sat imperturbable on his bench, his servants immobile, no fear in his eyes nor in theirs, but rather amusement—as if indeed this place were patrolled by hidden legions.

And Hibbert made hasty revision of the greybeard's naivete. Patur had known well enough what he had been doing all along—had been a cat playing with mice in his observance of hospitality.

"All right—Mister Patur!" Scarlatti shrilled. "Get up an' come over here! An' you two"—his eyes spurred the servants—"back up to the window! An' get a move on, I ain't kiddin'!"

PATUR said tranquilly, "Release the girl. You know not what you would do! Your threats are idle, for this is Khoire! And have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I not taken pains that you learn its ways are not yours?"

"Still bluffin', huh? Pretendin' you got a lot of bulls lurkin' in the background—you don't scare me none!" Scarlatti sneered. Hibbert realised that, whatever the reason for Patur's calm, it was not reliance on the armed effort of concealed cohorts.

Patur said, without the air of one who plays trump card, "Beware all overpowering emotion—lest the Change take you at that instant!"

"Ah, drop the smart-talk an' get down here 'fore I drill you!"

Mareth was wriggling desperately—she at least did not share the Khoirean's calm. The giant snarled at her, his eyes still on Patur. "Quiet—or I'll slug you!" Hibbert shook so strongly from helpless rage that he tottered. The warm blood was sticky between his fingers as he pulled on the wires.

Scarlatti lost the last flinder of patience, fired on the oldster. A hairbreadth instant before the shots cracked out, Patur rocked on his bench—to the left, frontward and the right. Just as the shots sounded he vanished abruptly—as though he had been blown out!

Raging, Scarlatti stamped a foot, his face that of the thwarted Eblis, prince of Hell! He spat fire—both figuratively and literally—as he cursed and swung his pistol on the woman-servant, who disappeared into nothingness and with her the male retainer. The giant's bullets chipped the green wall in line with where they would have been, but for that eerie vanishment.

Mareth had taken advantage of Scarlatti's diverted interest and wrested herself loose. He took no risk of her following Patur into limbo. His thick fingers closed on the fluttering folds of her gemmed gown before she had taken a step. Nor had Hibbert been idle despite bound hands and Carlotta's threat of a knife. He had swept a foot backward in a vicious kick at her shins, simultaneously springing aside. The swing of his foot missed its mark; he staggered.

Carlotta snapped, "Why, you—I'll get you now if it's the last thing I do!"

But the giant had caught Hibbert's movement, had leaped to Carlotta, dragging Mareth with him. The knife would have been deep in Hibbert's back at that instant had he not swung out with the pistol, striking Carlotta's arm and sending the blade flying behind her.

He bellowed at her, commanding her submission. Then, as she gulped down her frenzy, he rapped: "Quick, get more wire. Got to tie the gal too!" And as she hastened to do his bidding, he snapped at both Hibbert and Mareth, "Thought he'd lick me, did he! I'll show him! Snap it up, Carlotta!"

For all her strength, she found it no simple thing to break the wires dangling from the right-hand cube. She turned, raced across the room to where her knife had fallen, snatched it up and returned to saw on the slender threads. She scrambled back, waving them in triumph.

He shifted Mareth in his hold, one arm encircling her; the hand of the other drawing her wrists behind her. Carlotta tied the knits, and viciously tight. Mareth winced but made no outcry. And now the hands of both Hibbert and Mareth were secured behind their backs.

Scarlatti relaxed his grip, backed away from Mareth to scan her, his mouth awry with derisive satisfaction. Then, as she would have moved, he caught her again.

"Huh—so that was why you an' the old buzzard wasn't worried. You can mouse away any old time you want to by slippin' through them cracks I can't see! Well, you ain't goin' to do like he did. I'll see to that!"

He made quick surveillance of the situation. "It ain't what I wanted—I thought I'd get 'em both, the old geezer besides the gal. But it's good enough! Either them guys in the blue nighties open up the door an' send the steps down to the swamps for me, or I give this frail the works. So I guess they'll do what I tell 'em."

He leered at Hibbert. "She goes down the steps with us—that'll keep the blue guys from shuttin' off the juice while we're hikin' on down—so we ain't goin' to fall an' get smashed, not 'less she does too!"

HE BOOTED Hibbert toward the door, sent Carlotta to guard him with a peremptory toss of his chin. He said to Mareth, "An' you ain't goin' to make none of them there crooked turns an' get away."

He bent, caught her up as if she were a child, carried her in Carlotta's wake. They crossed the room. He added: "Good trick, that duckin' around corners where there ain't none—maybe you'll learn me how to do it when we get down home. Be nice to me, baby, an' ev'rythin'll be all right!"

Hibbert called back to him, "Scarlatti, you're crazy! You'll never get out this way!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For God's sake take Patur's advice—call this thing off before you get into worse trouble! Let Mareth go! Wait until Patur comes back and tell him it was all a mistake. They're humane here. They won't punish you too badly."

"Ah, swallow your tongue! Just be glad I'm takin' you. I could of left you behind!"

They cut into the blackness.

Hibbert asked, "And just why am I included?"

"Why? 'Cause I get a bang out of you—when you ain't slippin' your gears like a skidroad preacher! I don't want to see you go off your nut like Burks done—an' tryin' to make yourself into a bird or somethin', when you can be with me an' Carlotta, learnin' to take care of yourself.

"Carlotta don't feel that way about it—she'd just as soon leave you here! But I'm throwin' this party. When we get down below an' out of the swamps we're goin' to drop in on some of the boys I know. Big shots! I got the crystal gimmick an' the screen an' I'm bigger than they are! They got some smart birds workin' for 'em what can hook up the mask so it'll work. I'll show 'em movies of what I seen up here, an' so will you an' Carlotta an' the gal.

"We'll make us a movie camera like what you said makes them yellow steps—an' if somebody tries comin' after us with the artillery, we just copy a pitcher of a stone wall, an' no bullet can touch us! Or we want to bust into a bank? We just walk pitchers of ourselves right through the wall! We'll pull all our jobs by remote control! Anybody in the mob what looks like a rat—we put the mask on him, see what he's thinkin'. If it turns out he is a rat, we check him out! Yeah, with what I got planned, it don't s'prize me none if we take over the whole world!

"F'r instance—what if we sell the machinery to some country wantin' to stage a war? They can shoot out a pitcher of a army to do all the fightin'—nobody gets killed on their side An' nobody can set up no fifth column, 'cause everybody gets his mind read an' weeded out if he don't b'long. Sure, we'll take over the world! And then we'll come back up here an' muscle in on this joint, too!"

Hibbert was appalled at the possibility of the scheme. He prayed that, should Scarlatti regain the company of his criminal friends, no one could put the mask and web in operation. He shuddered, contemplating the picture of projected armies—soldiers of golden light whom no bullet could stay. A world without progress—a world of decay!

Of final death!

CHAPTER XV

The Xirod Rite

AGAIN Hibbert glanced back to the yellow doorway. It wavered, seem to lift and swing out of sight! Then he blinked—as the rest were blinking—for abruptly the blackness had become a wasteland of amber light!

Scarlatti jerked his head. "How'd we land here?" He scanned Mareth's defiant face for answer. And had they been precipitated into an incandescent furnace or sea of seething acid, Hibbert would have been as glad—anything, as long as the giant's progress down to the swamps met with hindrance!

On every hand was barren desert of luminous orange sand. It was as though they had dropped into a glittering copper bowl. The black sky bore down upon the strangely high horizon like a lid, giving Hibbert the sensation that for all the sweep of distance, he and the others were caught and caged like flies in a bottle.

Nothing broke the sheer and agoraphobic stretch of hard-packed, sterile sand save—perhaps three hundred yards to their right—a circle of squat dull stones like a diminutive replica of the Stonehenge menhirs. Stones, he thought, which vaguely resembled huddled men. Perhaps they had been carved in human shape and weathered by the shifting sands?

He heard the sound of the sun. It was softer and had lowered a note in the scale, perhaps because in Hibbert's world the sun was sinking westward. When he and the giant, Burks and Carlotta had climbed the flamingo's stair it had been but a little past noon. Since then not much upward of five hours had elapsed.

Five hours! In them he had shared Patur's century-spanning lifetime through the medium of the crystal mask—had watched, through Mareth's narration of Khoire's history, the threading of untold eons as beads upon a cord! The sun must now be setting

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on that land of his below. Soon its tone would weaken, be replaced by the chiming stars.

Scarlatti shook Mareth. She winced, cried faintly—then the green eyes blazed with anger!

"I ast you somethin'—now what's the answer! Or do I got to get playful?"

Hibbert forgot his hands, shackled behind his back, pressed forward furiously. But before he could move to Mareth's defense Carlotta distracted him and the giant by squeaking her surprise, by pointing.

The manlike stones were—men in truth! Seated immobile, perhaps in meditation, they had resembled rock because their legs were crossed under them, their backs humped, their heads bowed upon their breasts.

But now—as at some covert, inaudible signal—they were seated erect. They threw their hands upward in a synchronous movement to a common center high above them. If they had seen the newcomers, they made no sign of welcome or displeasure—did not even turn their heads. Whatever occupied them was vastly more important to them than the mere appearance of strangers.

"Who're they?" Scarlatti muttered.

"The monks of the Xirod sect," Mareth said placidly. "They are beginning one of their rituals. I think they will summon their power within."

Faint rose the monks' chant—as sound. But in reverse proportion to its faintness, its corresponding light was strong. In foaming waves of harlequin tints it spread out as it rose, made over the monks a high, fluted basket of light of which they formed the base.

The basket grew as if—like Cinderella's pumpkin—a magic wand had touched it. Uprearing, expanding, its colors separated into vertical bands, a cycle of spectra grading one into the other.

UP EACH streamer of color, as if shining pigmies were swarming up piebald ladders, flashed globules of sharper brilliancy, like bubbles rising in the stem of a champagne-glass. They gathered on the far-flung edges high above, piled there like heaped jewels, crowned the enormous funnel with a coronal of rainbow stars!

"Think they see us?" Scarlatti asked Carlotta. "I got to work on this babe, here—an' I don't want them buttin' in."

Mareth wriggled. "Set me down!"

He held fast. "Long as you're like this, you can't lam away." He tempered his voice. "Tell me nice, now—how do we slide out of here?" Then, "Never mind—I ain't goin' to pump you for a tip an' lose my shirt on it!"

His thoughtful gaze returned to the monks while he studied the situation. Down from the stars atop that flamboyant cone rained slim tendrils of their light. The monks arose, caught the ends of those tendrils as if grasping material strings. They moved as if in maypole dance, weaving in and out. Suddenly the monks passed from sight, leaving behind them the glowing inverted cone and the framework of irised radiance surrounding it.

"Lamp that!" Scarlatti said. "They know the way out—but I ain't so keen on takin' it! What do you say, Carlotta?"

But she made no answer, for now the monks had reappeared, high on the shining scaffold! They climbed its net, gained the top, stood knee-deep in the clustered stars.

"Standin' on light—I'm seein' things!" the giant whispered, his clutch on Mareth relaxing.

With the sound of a thunderclap—probably the Khoirean equivalent for a burst of light—something bloomed in the midst of the priests. They made obeisance to it. Perhaps it unfolded from nowhere—and perhaps it had merely stepped through one of Khoire's pliant directional arteries.

It appeared to be a head—but a head from a figment of nightmare! And if it were actually a head—then what like was the rest of its body, concealed, perhaps around the corner from which it peered!

It was a pyramid of burnished copper, thirty feet from base to apex. Its point was aimed earthward, like a bird's pointing bill. On each of its surfaces, turning to acknowledge the tribute of the priests, was an eye a yard across and faceted like a diamond, a roving pupil in every twinkling plane!

The lashes of those eyes were thick and bent, like the jointed legs of prodigious spiders. Carlotta shook her head incredulously at sight of them folding and straightening out again in an uncanny wink!

And though the monks of Xirod had taken no note of the newcomers, the pyramid's faces were less blase. The pupils in their crystalline facets focused on the giant and his party. The head angled forward on a neck like a copper pipe!

Ten feet it thrust forward, and twenty—

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then dully gleaming shoulders burst into sight from beyond the plane whence it peered. Shoulders like saw-toothed mountains of red metal with angled joints hinting at not two but a score of arms!

ONE of the arms came forward, a flexible cylinder of copper three feet in diameter, thirty yards in length. Out of the hollow wrist uncoiled the—fingers, Hibbert supposed them—spirals of wire unreeling in all thicknesses from hair to bulky cable. Not of copper as was the body, they seemed of varicolored and hitherto unknown metals.

The silence was broken by Carlotta's shriek. "It's comin' at us! *Get!*"

She pulled on Scarlatti. He shifted Mareth's weight to one arm, his free hand snatching his gun. As well beat off an elephant with a straw! He scrambled backward, and back with him stumbled Carlotta. Nor was Hibbert laggard, impelled both by mounting misgivings at the flow of those wires toward them and desire to remain close to Mareth.

There was a curious rippling, as if all before them were only a painting on a gust-shaken curtain. . . .

Blink-eyed pyramid, serpentine unwinding wires, monks atop their fantastic tower, the marigold desert itself—all were swept away! Scarlatti had stumbled inadvertently on another of those warped distances! The four stood now in endless redness, a fog of glowing cinnabar reminiscent of Burks' red room in his tower.

The giant lowered his gun, swung his head to take in this new development. Carlotta likewise swiveled to peer about her. It was Hibbert's chance to strike; he rammed himself against the man, shaking him from his stance. Scarlatti staggered, instinctively shot out his hands to regain his balance—and dropped Mareth.

Instantly she threw herself against Hibbert, her back against his chest and her bound hands gripping his belt. Swifter than the giant's clutching hands, she dipped sidewise in the cryptic motion of crossing the distances and—sudden as the slap of a fish's tail—the atmosphere of scarlet blinked out in darkness.

Hibbert and Mareth stood in a landscape all of shadow. There was color around them, yes, and the feeble ghost of light—but they were faint almost to extinction, muddy and diseased. Where hitherto the ground had been ever bright, it was poisonous, decaying brown, only in the least degree removed from the vacant blackness of the sky.

For a moment Hibbert thought that the girl and himself had entered a darkling cavern from whose low ceiling hung enormous bats, their leathern wings unfurled and sweeping the floor.

Her fingers released his belt. She moved from him a little.

She asked herself, "Where are we now?" And answered with sinking voice, "The jungles! The haven of error—of sin! The forests of madness!"

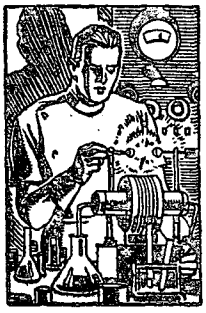
CHAPTER XVI

The Human Forest

HE TORE his eyes from her glowing face, fixed them on the hanging forms

[*Turn page*]

Across the Street—But Worlds Away!



SCIENTIST Ed Bronson, in the course of his radio experiments, communicated with a lady who claimed to live across the street—but he soon found out she wasn't there at all. The matter mystified him, and his investigation gave him the key to the problem—but he couldn't find the door!

His search for that door led to his discovery of two alien worlds co-existent with the Earth, worlds spawned by the atomic fissure of the first atom bomb at Alamogordo. His battle against the emissaries of these worlds as he strives to save the Earth from destruction is the basis of next issue's powerful novel—ONE OF THREE, by Wesley Long.

Only one of the three planets can survive—which? The answer is in ONE OF THREE—a novel that will hold you spellbound as you follow its amazing events to a surprising climax! Look forward to an unforgettable reading experience!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

until conditioned to the dying light. The drooping shapes were not sagging bats but leaves—prodigious, ten feet across, and more than twice that in length.

They fell from boughs bloated and twisted on blistered trunks like sickly human limbs frozen in torture. From all sides and above they were draped, a silent assembly of watchful waiting presences, their upward ranks merging into the night sky.

"We must leave this spot at once!" Mareth said. "For your friend was close upon us, and perhaps he saw my movement of leaving."

She added, as he wrested at his fetters and winced as they cut him afresh, "Time later for us to free our hands. Hasten!"

Her bright hair streamed in a golden halo as she shouldered her way through the crackling leaves. A hum permeated the jungle—that thinning drone which Hibbert had heard on the bridge of Burks' tower and in the desert—the sonancy of his own world's setting sun.

He trailed Mareth. The crisp leaves scraped his face, rattling. They suggested, in their grudging slide athwart his skin, that they were old and horny hands of feeble giants seeking to check his progress.

A red ember, in size and color the glowing tip of a cigarette, skimmed from beyond a leaf, alighted on his arm and dimmed to darkness—a mosquito, its glow but the whir of its wings!

"Mareth—please wait!" Hibbert called. "I'm afraid I'll lose you by stumbling into one of those dimensional faults, as Scarlatti did."

She halted, awaited him. She said, worried, "Could I but find one quickly, we would step through it and away from this lair of terror!"

She moved so that their backs were to each other, her shackled hands plucking at the wires securing his wrists.

She said, "We are far enough from the way by which we entered to risk this—and we need our hands. For this is the forest of dementia! All these trees once were men and beasts but their abnormal minds could not maintain those bodies to which they were born and they became what we now see.

"The Higher Powers transported them here, away from the settled areas—to live if they could, or to die. And unthinkable things feed on them! None ventures here save students of psychology or the relatives of some unfortunate, seeking to coax him back to sanity."

She had loosened the wires somewhat. He strained on them, cracking the blood-clots. It hurt like the bite of iodine and he bit his lip. The wires still held.

Working at them, she went on: "When I saw the opening from the scarlet place, I knew not whither it led, save from the unkindness of your tall friend—and I was willing to bear any risk to be rid of him. I little dreamed that we should come here!

"It is dilemma indeed! Because of terror of the jungle's fierce and mighty beasts, any directional differences we might find will be uncharted, unexplored—and we know not what worse peril we might plunge into, were we to try them!"

"Can't you find our way out without resorting to them, then? You seem to know something of this place."

"Yes, we must seek plants burning brightly, lusty with life! These dark ones around us are old, drooping and dying. The young plants will be at the fringe of the forest, newly placed there by the High Ones."

His wires fell away. He stretched; shook off the drops of blood rivuleting down his wrists. Then he turned and made short work of her bonds.

"Why don't your people kill off these jungle beasts? Aren't they apt to stumble through some of the openings and into the streets of your cities?"

"To your first question—it is best that the beasts live on, for Khoire is filled with evils you do not dream of and the beasts prey on them and so control them. To your second—it may be that they lack the intelligence to take advantage of the flaws and it may be also that they cannot see them."

SHE was rubbing her wrists. Tender as seemed her skin it was not so badly torn as his own. She said, "Nevertheless, should we find any flaws we will peer through them. For much rather I would confront the unknown than a Ksor and the jungle abounds with them. Ksors," she explained to his lifted brows, "are like the alligators of your swampland below—but as enormous in comparison as are mountains to grains of sand."

He rather doubted that!

"And swift!" she italicised. "Swift almost as the pellets of your friend's weapon!"

"Stop calling Scarlatti my friend. I wasn't

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in his company by choice. And tell me—while you're about it—why did you save me?"

The green of her eyes was soft as that tender light which seeps through the leaves of a springtime glen.

"You are not like him. You would have saved me at cost to yourself! And I thought, too, that the Change, in your case, may be all for the better! And something within me whispered that. . . ."

Her voice softened, faltered, diminished to silence. Abruptly she turned, pushed through the curtaining leaves. But not before he had caught her change of color.

He raced the few steps she had taken, caught hold of her. She paused, lightly resting against him.

"Mareth!" he murmured. "What was it that whispered? And what did it say?"

Her color deepened. She did not flinch from his arms slipping around her in timid, uncertain embrace. She would not look at him, however. And barely he heard her.

"I think it was my heart which whispered—and it said—no longer do I pity you!"

And as he deciphered her implication with a gasp of joy she drifted out of his hold.

"Whatever I feel for you—let it abide for now! We must keep alert to live. Hold to me, lest one of us slip away!"

They went on. The air was brightening, though by imperceptible degrees. Detail by detail the jungle became distinct—and the clearer it grew, the less Hibbert appreciated it. He perceived its stealthy movement everywhere, not the normal sway of branches in a breeze-trodden wood of his own world—no, like fingers curling and straightening out when he and Mareth were near them.

There were snaky vines which stirred sluggishly like thick pythons, their leaves lifting and lowering gradually like plying fins—cacti from whose barrel-shaped, hedgehog-quilled bodies rayed long-thorned tentacles which quested feebly and blindly, the fumblings of sickly squids.

The leaves which had clung so lingeringly to him were fingered like flattened hands as though, pressed in tremendous vises, they had not lost their power to clutch. Their touch was more unpleasant than the physical feel of slime. His skin crawled. He took greater care ever to precede Mareth, striking the leaves from her path that she might not feel them.

It became lighter—and now there was a pervasive scent. Fetid, it reminded him of the stench of a summer-heated zoo.

Tall stalks and slim ones suddenly sagged down, as if bowed by the weight of the great eyelike balls which tipped them. Truly they were eyes, their calices their lashes.

"Peeping Toms!" he called, striking up at them—and it might have been, before taking this shape, they had been just that; people living vicariously, gratifying only the lust of the eye—and so condemned to this purgatorial semblance.

THEN what of those others—the thorny cacti, the stroking hands, the serpentine vines? What of these enormous spires which he and Mareth were passing, whose flowers might have been exaggerated snapdragons, save that their pursed petals were a little too close in shape to the human mouth, their red hue too similar to the vital tinge of blood!

They were rocking, the blooms of one stem meeting and striving to hold to another. "Kiss plants," he decided. "Doubtless people who never thought of a thing but desire."

Brighter burned the air, and the ground warmed with amber luminescence. Nourished by the glowing soil, the plants and trees grew taller, straighter, their sap no longer shadow but radiance. The putrid odor changed to one of spice.

How long they had been traveling, how far, he did not know. But now his lame leg was throbbing and Mareth was tiring. She paused to rest, leaning softly against him, the clasp of his arms around her waist. A wisp of her golden hair smoothed his cheek.

His head lowered, his lips seeking hers. She fended him back, murmuring pensively—and effectively cooling his ardor, "I wonder what you will be most like after the Change?"

She moved on, her hand in his, leading him.

Suddenly she stopped. "An opening!"

He followed her gaze but saw nothing to support her premise.

"Hold tightly!" She edged forward. "I will look into it. Hold to me. If I tighten grasp on your hand, draw me back."

Her head, one shoulder and its arm disappeared as though a giant cleaver had swept down faster than light and away, shearing them off and bearing them into it. They reappeared.

She said, "Look with me!" She pulled him partly into the unseen fissure.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The jungle was replaced by nothing but blackness, as if every atom of it had faded away Still gripping him, Mareth reached out a foot, groped with it for solid support and found none. She bent, swept her free hand in search of any tangibility, encountered nothing.

"It seems to be bottomless," she mourned.

Something flashed meteorically far below, a bird of many wings—two at the base of its neck, a pair in the center of its back, and a third set just over its tail—like the seraphim of Blake's paintings. Either it was a quixotic creature which from sheer perversity flew upside down—for its feet were folded on the side facing them—or due to Khoire's peculiar physics the gravity of this black region functioned in reverse.

"I know not the place," Mareth said. "I distrust it. Let us continue through the jungle."

They pulled from the crevice, slogged onward. The leafy hands gripped them, yielding reluctantly, only to be replaced by others. Eye-stalks lowered to scan them, flapping lashes in ghastly flirtation. Light surged ahead in leaping crescendos. The jungle's scent was diluted by another savor, the clean and exhilarant freshness of water.

Hibbert and Mareth wedged past fan-shaped leaves, yards wide, which—spotted with iridescence like the spread tails of peacocks—lifted and lowered languidly as though eliciting admiration. It was interesting to note that what was visible of their roots shone red and scaly, like the feet of pigeons.

The flood-tides of radiance was the sound of a waterfall which tumbled in widening whiteness sheer from the somber heavens. It was the outlet of some ocean draining through one of the dimensional vagaries—sent through it by happy coincidence of rocking waves which duplicated Patur and Mareth in their sliding, sideward motion of transition between planes.

At the fall's base the green life crammed thickly. The plants pressed informally close to the water's edge to drink together.

Mareth moved closer to Hibbert, though she had not released his hand. She said gravely, "Once we are at the jungle's edge, I can find our way home—for the land there I know. Here, where the forms are fresh and vital, our greatest danger lies. For here lurk the beasts—where their food is young and savory."

While Hibbert rubbed his aching leg, she caught her streaming hair, twisted it, bound it in a knot. They crept onward, came upon a path of stronger brilliance than the dun-colored ground it channeled. On either side lay uprooted trees and tumbled plants, as if a mighty plow had passed.

"The mark of a Ksor—and recent!" Mareth sighed. "See, the fallen trees have not withered. Tread lightly now!" For their footfalls were seen as faint flashes of light.

Abruptly Hibbert stopped before a barrier of the great leaves, sniffing. Mareth looked an inquiry. What was that odor—so like a vast and decaying chrysanthemum? Carlotta's perfume!

He pushed on that wall of peacock leaves; caught a flash of purple sprinkled with golden stars—Carlotta's wrap-around. Saw a spurt of flame and heard the faint voice which made it—Carlotta's!

He turned to Mareth, laid a warning finger to his lips, forgetting that in Khoire the gesture was insignificant.

He spread the leaves farther.

CHAPTER XVII

The Change

SCARLATTI and his woman were stumbling a hundred yards ahead and, though Hibbert's leg pained him, his powers of endurance were apparently greater than the giant's. Scarlatti could barely keep on his feet. He was tottering, pausing now and then to glare angrily at the forest hemming him, to wipe the back of his hand over his sweating forehead.

And Carlotta staggered while steadying him. Maternally she held her arm around him, patting him, mumbling her reassurances. He struck her away. Either the giant had fortuitously slipped to the jungle from the scarlet region or had watched Mareth's departure with such care that he had been able to emulate her movements.

At any rate, there before Hibbert and Mareth he was with his woman, and certainly not in the pink of condition And now he had stopped stock-still, he braced himself against the azure shaft of a tree more feathered than leafed. Jerkily he pulled the frail viewing-web from his pocket and mopped

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his face with it, his uneven breath visible as spurts of flame.

He flinched peevishly at Carlotta's labored smile of sympathy—and it was a mark in her favor that she summoned the smile at all, for she was obviously as much travel-numbed as he.

Petulantly the giant pushed at her—a weary, spoiled child perversely repudiating the thing dearest to him. His swarthy, not-quite-handsome face was contorted like that selfsame child's, about to burst into weeping. He did not replace the web in his pocket, but savagely crumpled it and tossed it among the greenery as if it no longer meant anything to him.

And then—he went mad! He whirled as at some signal, jerking his gun from his belt and firing haphazardly at nothing! The shots streaked like little lightnings, their cleaveage of air the bright trails of tracer bullets. Carlotta, intent on retrieving the discarded web, straightened at that gunplay, shrieked a swirl of color and sprang to tear the gun from him.

Before she could touch him, he had folded abruptly at the waist as if his spine had snapped. Face downward he fell. Under the blue plumes of the spreading tree he lay twitching. Carlotta dropped on her knees beside him, tugged on his great weight, moaned as she rolled him over. At sight of his white face she must have imagined that he had fainted. She lifted his feet on her lap.

"Frank, honey—*Frank!*" Hibbert heard her whimper.

Her eyes desperately roved the forest with its fantastic trees, as if appealing to their hinted humanity to come to her aid. And as if they caught that plea they responded—the blue plumes fluttering overhead as if afraid and straining to wing away—the peacock fans fluttering derision.

Carlotta's eyes caught Hibbert before he could withdraw and let the screening leaves spring back into place—not that he would have done so. She waved frantically, screaming. Beyond her the trees of the flattened hands mimicked her waving.

Hibbert started forward but Mareth held him back. She was beautiful, and he loved her—yes. But now he saw her beauty as elfin and alien. She was a porcelain princess of gem-green eyes and gold-thread hair, appropriately inhuman and unfeeling, he thought, as she drew on him.

"Look, Mareth—I can't stand by. I've got to help him. Wait here and don't be afraid. I'll get the gun and I won't let him harm you."

"How strange you people are! He has been harsh to you and surely would slay you, were you in his way. Yet you would aid him! Think you that when he regains his strength, he will appreciate your assistance? He will treat you as badly as before!"

"I know that!" He pulled from her but the slender hands held fast.

HER eyes were the green of the unfathomable seas. "And knowing, you still would aid him? But why?"

"Mareth, I don't know why. Except that there's no real harm in him. He'd wreck the world if he had the chance, sure—but with no harm intended. I can't explain! And in his crude way, he's fond of me. Let me go!"

Then, all the more angrily because still he loved her, as one who worships the indifferent moon:

"If you're afraid for yourself—you're hidden. And you can get away if something happens to me. You'll manage to get home."

And now her eyes were all human in her goddess face—the eyes of Kwan Yin, Mother of Mercy.

She said, "I but tested you. And if in your land there are but a few men such as you—then I renounce my partisanship with Dweil! Khoire shall never abandon you!"

And, releasing him, "Go if you will. But you cannot help him. It is no illness which has seized him but—the Change."

The giant was shuddering. He groaned, drew his knees upward, slipping his feet from Carlotta's lap. She ceased her waving, turned to him. He was flexing his legs as if seeking to draw his knees to his chin. His sallow whiteness flushed as he did so, then paled again. His legs dropped heavily.

He arched his back, flaming breath siffling between his gritted teeth. He beat his fists on the ground. It was as though the man felt himself cased in some suffocating shell from which he must break.

Carlotta scrambled to his head, grasped and shook his shoulders. Feebly he would have thrust her from him but his nerveless hands dropped even as he raised them. On the tree above and on those beyond, the plumes and verdant leaves aped him and sagged limp.

"Hibbert!" Carlotta shrilled. "Hibbert—come quick!"

"I'm coming!" he called, sprinting toward

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her. Behind him came Mareth.

Even as he raced, the giant turned over on his stomach, his fingers loosely pawing the ground, streaking it brighter wherever they scratched. He humped himself up—it might have been this huddled position which made him seem smaller than Carlotta, but no! He had shrivelled, was shrinking still!

His skin wrinkled like crêpe, sweat rilling from it—then tautened, clothing a skeleton considerably diminished. His wet garments sagged from him—and now he was smaller than Hibbert! Carlotta was monstrous beside him.

His legs dwindled. Kicking them spasmodically, he flung off shoes many sizes too large for him. His socks hung like loose bags. Carlotta pulled him upright and the wide circle of his belt slid from his tiny hips. His tentlike shirt hung down to his shins.

As if its madness had been banished for the moment by what Scarlatti had become the forest left off its malicious raillery. It was motionless, rigid, apprehensively still.

No longer a swaggering, blustering giant, Scarlatti was—a furtive, malignant dwarf! Hideous and pathetic—his hands small and helpless as an infant's, but bony and curved like claws. His head was so large that his frail neck could not support its weight, and it lolled aslant.

His brows crept down over his eyes as if flesh and bone like wet clay had been thumbed askew by the destroying hand of a vicious sculptor. His eyes were almost hidden by the smoky hairs as he glared desperately from their corners. He seized his head with those tiny talons, raised it so that he might gaze without strain. . . .

And saw the shape and size of his hands!

He opened his long-toothed, twisted mouth in a gasp of horror. He ripped up his shirt to scan his misshapen legs—his feet like those deformed stumps so proudly possessed by the Chinese women of generations ago. He knew himself for a monster and shook his head, refusing to believe!

AT SIGHT of his face, Carlotta had screamed, had thrown her hands over her eyes and run from him. Futilely Scarlatti waved after her, his voice a discordant rasp—the call of a crow.

"Carlotta! What's happened? *Carlotta!*" He tottered shakily after her.

Straight for Mareth and Hibbert, Carlotta ran, shrilling ripples of fire. She flung herself upon the girl, hung sobbing against her.

"It happened like you said—he changed! He's awful—he ain't my man no more—he's somebody else!"

The dwarf, his head held up by his hands, glowered at them as he hobbled toward them.

"Don't leave him like that!" Carlotta babbled. "Change him back. Make him his own self again! For the love of God—change him! Or I'll bust my lid!"

Shivering as if, within her, a mighty spring had snapped she reeled from Mareth, threw back her head and screamed—her despair so keen that almost it savored of joy!

And now the expectant forest was rustling uneasily, was murmuring a faint fog of weaving radiances—as a copse stirs under the first blasts of an onrushing storm. What were those leaping lights so far beyond Scarlatti and the walling trees—rhythmic, like signal-flashes and nearing with every wink?

Tightly the eye-stalks snapped shut their lids, as if closing out visions of horror! The flat green hands dragged on the spires of the mouths as if pulling themselves from the soil and the gnawing of worms therein. The peacock fans snapped into slim folded sticks, hiding their tempting splendors from the approach of the profane.

The forest feared those coming lights which brightened with every flicker!

Hibbert had no pause to consider and weigh that fear. For the giant had turned, had teetered back to where lay his outsize trousers and the fallen gun. And Hibbert, still paralyzed by dismay, disgust and, too, by sorrowing pity, did not realise the little man's intent until too late to check it.

The pistol was too heavy for a dwarf with such hapless hands. Scarlatti gripped it with both of them, heaved backward, managed to lift it. He came scudding toward Hibbert and the women, his head jogging bowed on his breast as he waddled, the black coals of his eyes straining wickedly upward to mark his direction.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Ksor

IT WAS then that Hibbert threw off the spell of emotion and rushed for the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pigmy as swiftly as his lamed and throbbing leg would allow. It was then that the struggling trees wrenched apart as if making among themselves a lane for the passing of some evil visitant!

And it was then that Carlotta altered Scarlatti's purpose by screaming, "Mareth—change him back! I'll get his gun. He's too little to stop me! I'll get you the mask an' the web! You can have them—you can do anything you want to us—only change him back!"

And even as Hibbert raced toward him, even as the flashing lights flared dazzingly near—a thousand feet away—now, three hundred—the dwarf shrilled at Carlotta.

"Sell me short, will you? Kick me when I'm down! Take over 'cause now I'm little, you—!"

The gun was pointing past Hibbert at Carlotta. The dwarf steadied its wobbling in his weak grip. Laboredly, his tongue gripped between his crooked teeth from the stress of his effort, he worked to finger the trigger. At the same time, Hibbert was shouting to deflect the dwarf's attention, was throwing himself in the gun's way to shield Carlotta by his own body—and also at that moment a monstrous bounding thing crashed down the lane through the trees, just behind the little figure.

The Ksor! It was all Mareth had said of it and more!

A lizard—a gigantic lizard, all of eighty feet from horny toes of its many legs up to the humps of its multiple shoulders! Scaled with plates of green-flecked bronze larger than shingles. It's head more a bird's than an alligator's with rows of poniard teeth like ivory!

As Hibbert threw himself aside, it lifted its head in a roar like a volcanic fireburst! The light of Scarlatti's shot was lost in the flare of that bellow. Hibbert's leap carried him into the gun's path just too late. Carlotta was jerked away from Mareth. She half-whirled as if struck by a cyclone gust.

And, while the gun dropped from the pigmy's hands, while Hibbert stumbled and sprawled, the Ksor's head lowered. It shot forth a thin brown whip of a tongue straight toward Scarlatti—the tongue of a frog licking up a fly!

The dwarf had heard the great beast's roar, seen its explosive light. He was turning, struggling to lift his lolling head as he swerved, to see what had come from behind him. Even as the move was begun, the lashing tongue swept around him, flipped him from the ground and into the scarlet abyss of the jaws!

Carlotta's hands dropped from the red stain on her side. "*Frank!*" She ran forward as the jaws clamped together with a rush of fetid wind. And as she ran, hands blindly reaching toward the vanished Scarlatti, as Hibbert scrambled up to intercept her in this madness—the Change fell upon her! Almost instantaneous in her case, it happened so quickly that the eyes scarcely caught it!

The running woman melted, was a manikin of yellowed wax thrust too close to a flame; the rivuleting droplets sank into the ground, shrinking her in mid-step. Her slimming neck lengthened, her arms and legs thinned; her skin deepened its color.

The starry purple robe slipped wreathing from those spindling arms, and her underclothing, her shoes and stockings fell away as she tumbled down on hands which struck earth as slender paws. She had become something not quite but very like a black and hairless dog!

A wounded hound—blood forking along her lean ribs! She yelped, eluding Hibbert's preventive grasp—and indeed, that reach was halted in the making, begun to hold a woman and arrested on sight of the thing she had become, so sudden was that Change!

Straight for the Ksor the black dog sped, teeth bared in a snarl as it leaped—an ant attacking an elephant! The Ksor's brown tongue flailed forth a second time, licked up the springing hound!

THERE was another noisome breath as it closed its jaws. It waggled them from side to side—munching!

Mareth's hand so firmly gripped in Hibbert's that the two were as one, they wheeled and made for the trees. And all of that forest which once had been human had been shocked into fleeting sanity by the advent of the destroyer, the Ksor. What remnants of humanity it retained asserted themselves: It protected Hibbert and Mareth as best it could!

The peacock fans unfurled, waved wildly, scattering showers of spangled gleamings, every glint the tinkle of glass. The viridine hands lifted as if to thrust back the towering bulk. The crimson mouths screamed imprecations.

They were to the Ksor as little children

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

offering their toys to the onrush of a bore of lava—and as lava obliterates all in its path, so the Ksor cleaved them, felled them, trampled them under.

The tingling which hitherto had coursed through Hibbert as an unobtrusive and not unpleasant sensation strengthened to flashes of shooting agony. It stabbed his crippled leg so intensely that he thought the bone had snapped—knew it had not, else he could not stumble onward.

Mareth tripped. He caught her, dragged her along. Tall as she was, in her slimness she weighed little, yet even that fragility was a tremendous strain on his dying wind and faltering heart. For a time the verdure parted before them, clearing their way; closing after them and knitting together into a woven wall—a matting of straw against the fury of a flood!

The green hands pushed Hibbert and Mareth along—but only for a time. It was a jungle of madness, and its craze took possession again. Where it had sought to defend them it became indifferent or spiteful—or hindering!

The hands were beating Hibbert back, the snaky creepers seeking to trip and tie him. He would have stopped defeated. But Mareth urged him on. The last Ksor flash was but one of its leaps away—another spring and it would crush them!

He gasped, strangling, his lungs scorched as if crammed with embers. The blood throbbing in his temples and eyes made drumming blindness. At last there was no more pain in his chest, only numbness. He ran for Mareth's sake alone on legs he could not feel. He felt himself falling in the blackness of his blindness, thought himself fainting. . . .

But it was the blackness of another plane! Mareth had spied a hidden opening, dragged him through it. Air shrieked past his ears. They were falling from some inconceivable height.

He saw, below, two bright forms arrowing from an oblique angle toward them; he and Mareth met them with a jarring impact. Their reflections! They had dropped on a slanting mirrored floor, so steep that it seemed a slide.

Their skidding slowed to a stop. The floor was level! True, they had fallen from a great distance, but in midair the direction had shifted, throwing them almost parallel to the glassy pave.

They lay, too exhausted to rise, Hibbert's head on Mareth's breast. Gradually their wind returned. Mareth stirred, looked at him and smiled. He sat upright, and she, their faces very close. He swept his arms about her, held her very tightly. The beat of her heart matched his own. Her lips were soft and sweet.

AT LAST he remembered. He groaned, "You love me! But will you love what I will become—during the Change?"

"Oh, but already you have made it! And still you are a man! Not quite as before, but —yes, I think I love you!"

He took his arms from her, bent over the reflecting floor and saw what never could have been his own face. It was a stranger's! And he knew that he looked upon what few men of his world ever would see of themselves—his soul!

Nor was he sure he liked that sight, though at no time had he imagined his inner self a thing of splendor. He lifted and looked at his large hands—they were hugely strong as had been Scarlatti's. That part was pleasant, yes.

But his face had aged by years. Its features had coarsened, the forehead widened a little, the brows grown thick. His mouth was fuller, a trifle weak. Save for that breadth of forehead, those wide-set eyes and his olden coloring, his was very like that face which once had been Scarlatti's—the dwarf eaten by the Ksor!

He had not noticed until now that his garments had been burst and rent by the Change. Also his shoes pinched, despite their broken laces. He struggled out of them, said half-humorously, "I never thought myself a mental giant!"

She laughed. "Nor are you! But only a man—and not so beautiful as those of Khoire, nor so perfect. Yet strong and worthy, as men should be! And should a woman love else?"

They had fallen into a remote corner of the Hall of Blackness from a hitherto unsuspected opening. With little difficulty Mareth found the green-walled chamber and Patur.

Patur seemed small now against Hibbert's altered size. Feverishly he was threading through his fingers that necklace which ever he carried.

He cried, "You are back—and safe!" He dropped the necklace, gathered Mareth close, scanned Hibbert approvingly. "And the others?"

Mareth told him the story. Hibbert, bend-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to retrieve the discarded beads, learned why Patur took such comfort from them.

From each of the rounded stones pulsed faint current, thrilling the nerves of the fingertips with vague sensation. One bead was the warmth of smooth, soft flesh, another the lazy heat of the summer sun. There were globules with the soothing chill of virgin moonlight, the nipping tang of frost.

Some of the stones were dry and crisp and pleasant as happy letters from an old, regretted love, the brown petals in a rose-jar. Or moist and reminiscent of dank fallen leaves, summoning memories.

No, it was no rosary, but rather a device to lull taut senses, comparable to the alcoholic drink and tobacco of Hibbert's world. Small wonder that Scarlatti had been startled and displeased by the cigarettes he had found. The Khoireans had probably improved on them—unsuccessfully, according to the giant's viewpoint.

The giant? But Scarlatti had died a dwarf!

Mareth cut in on his regrets over Scarlatti and Carlotta, for she was telling Patur of her love for Hibbert. Nor was Patur surprised. Well, things were done differently in Khoire. There was no need for prolonged courtships, when a mere glance assured one of another's character.

Sadly Patur said, "Deeply do I regret that you must depart—but it is the wise Law! You love Mareth. She loves you. For awhile, just that knowledge must be enough. You would not be so selfish as to take her down to your homeland, where monsters pretend to be men, and death—if not in violent form—comes swiftly from natural causes. There she must age and die; here she may remain in the bloom of youth for untold centuries! And you the same, beside her—can you but make your way back."

And unsettled by the pain in Hibbert's eyes, "Were you to stay now, you would be but a burden upon her. For you are not equipped for life in Khoire, are a mere infant in such needed knowledge. Do you love her as such a child—or as a man? If man, then go—and prove your manhood by returning in strength!"

Suddenly, discreetly, Patur recalled that he had not made his report of the developments to the Great Ones and the search-parties headed by Dweil. He warned, "You have but a few moments remaining!" And left them. They made good use of his absence.

CHAPTER XIX

Again the Flamingo

MARETH sighed, her head on Hibbert's shoulder. From aloft rang a brassy fanfare and stiff rays of dazzling white light suddenly crossed lances in the chamber, like the swift formation of jagged, luminous crystals. They were the splendors of what awesome witnesses, peering from unseen corners!

Patur returned with four of the blue-robes, the projectors of the flamingo's stair. He said, "The Great Ones have sent their representative to behold observance of the law. He is here in the light. The time is come, Hibbert, that you leave Khoire."

The blue-robes ranked themselves behind Hibbert. Mareth whispered, "When you return I will be waiting. And though you never come—still I will wait."

They went through the dark corridor. He heard soft and wistful music.

She said, "It is night in your homeland. You are hearing the stars! And harken—the moon is rising."

But he would not heed that deepening mellow call, that distant ring of a northland frost-giant's horn, chilling its prey to easy cature. He lifted her slender hand to his lips.

In the room of the Frame, while the blue-clad beings busied themselves with the black circle's gems, Mareth tore off a crystal pendant and put it in Hibbert's hand. It quivered with throbbing warmth.

"It is a better remembrance than a lock of hair," she said. "It pulses with my life and is thus a part of me." And he understood that it was of more associative value than a photograph. It was a portion of Mareth herself.

"And a second keepsake I will give you," she furthered. With a wary look at Patur, who after all had the decency to stand a little removed from them, she arose on tiptoe. Her lips brushed Hibbert's cheek. She whispered, "These words—nor ever forget them!"

She spoke with her voice rather than thought. *"Va khoseth yaga!"* Yet were Patur watching, which he was not, he would have but thought that she kissed Hibbert.

She slipped back to Patur's side at the base of one of the Fu dogs. It glared from above, fire wreathing from its nostrils—alive!

Hibbert wondered why Mareth had whis-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pered those three words and what they meant—nor ever guessed their psychological value. *"Va khoseth yaga!"* Were they simple statement of love in Khoire's alien tongue or the shibboleth of the mystic teachers he must seek?

Now the black frame's jewels caught and relayed each others' rays, wove them into a fabric of gold. The Doorway to the Forefathers' World was open!

Patur pointed, no longer sympathetic, all cold efficiency. *"Descend!"*

One last backward look Hibbert took from the yellow opening—at Patur and Mareth poised at the Fu dog's feet, the oldster cold and unmoved, the girl smiling despite her tearful eyes.

* * * * *

The yellow haze closed over him; as it walled him from the last vestiges of Khoire, he saw the Fu dogs stirring, stretching on their bases. They vaulted down to the mirrored floor, over the heads of Patur and Mareth. They trotted to the ebon frame and its glowing circle, squatted before it on their haunches—sharp-eyed, vigilant.

Down the golden tunnel's steps went Hibbert, down past the walls of adamant yellow flowers and leaves. He squeezed through the veils of the vines, tiptoed gingerly over the brittle moss which slashed his naked feet.

And now he stood on the lowest step of all. The pool of the blue flamingo lay just without the light; he could see it as through translucent yellow glass. The water into which he must descend was spangled with the uprush of golden bubbles, a cauldron of seething molten gold.

One movement more and he would pass from the light into the drab world of pride and deceit and unreason—the aching loneliness of passion denied, the bitter hunger of thwatred desire!

For a twinkling his resolution wavered, the cry of his heart louder than the bidding of his mind. The blue-robes watching above must have seen him falter. They snapped off the stairway's current. The yellow light faded away as the rainbow dies from the sky. Hibbert fell into the pool, into darkness. . . .

Into pain!—that same pain which he had known on entering the hidden land! Adjustment, no doubt, of his substance from one set of physical limitations to the other. The pain ate and eradicated all his senses with the crunch of acid teeth.

IT WORE slowly away. As an infant fresh from the torture of nascence becomes feebly aware of the life about it, so Hibbert awoke to sensation.

He heard the rasping purr of the frogs down somewhere in the darkness, the whirring of elfin motors. Heard too the fluted laughter of the cicadas, the deep twanging plucked note which was the cry of an owl. A faintly glowing spot hung before his wide eyes, intensified into a lopsided, three-quarters moon.

Under that cold moon lay the ruin and the swamps. The blue light was so intense that, save for the velvet blackness of the shadows, it might have been day. The stars were very large, very bright—diamonds spread on a jeweler's dark cloth of sky for the tempting of foolish angels.

He waded from the pool to the dry parapet, stood staring at the water. He raised his eyes. Somewhere, only a few hundred feet above, Mareth was waiting—farther from him than the moon!

He remembered her pendant. Its touch was no longer cool nor yielding, the feel of her awakening kiss. He uncurled his fingers, looked at it. In Khoire it had been clear and glowing, a home of rainbow reflections; here it was opaque, dull and colorless, like that stone known to the Chinese as dead jade, which they say their gods have worn—and, in the wearing, killed.

Even as his eyes sought it, the little sphere crumbled to powder, was whisked from his palm by a breeze, fluttered away in a wisp of whirling dust. Its ribbon thinned to grey cobweb, coiled upward like a tendril of smoke, was gone. Their elements, those of an alien, incomparably finer world, could not withstand the destructive forces of his own. Fairy gold, turning to ashes in the hand of a mortal!

Left to him now were only the words Mareth had spoken, or words he had dreamed—unless, of course, he were not dreaming still.

Was there not that other proof—his changed self? He stepped for confirmation to the pool's glass, but before he could scan the image therein he heard the sound of distant clapping. Somewhere a lone pair of hands was beating together.

It rang from overhead, the ovation of an angel! He threw his eyes upward to a double twinkle like the butterfly chase of mating stars. The glints grew, bore down upon him

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—the lustrous wings of a metallic bird.

The blue flamingo, returning to its pool! Not slain by Burks after all—or was it—was it Burks himself?

With the faintest of slashes it settled into the water. It waited for the ripples to smooth away, bent over, peered at its reflection. Then it lifted its head, preened itself proudly, and saw Hibbert.

It cocked a bronze-glinting eye on him. He heard its voice, and knew it to be in his mind rather than in his ear:

"Frank—I thought you were rubbed out!"

They were the crisp tones of Burks!

Hibbert cried, "Burks—is it really you?"

The bird answered, "It's me, all right. But Frank, tell me—how did you wiggle away? I heard from Patur that something—"

"I'm not Scarlatti—I'm Hibbert!"

"Hibbert?" The long neck shot up in surprise, then angled forward. "Hibbert, eh? You look a lot more like Frank! So that's what you were inside all the time!" His laughter was dry. "A heck of a joke!"

HE STRUTTED, admiring his reflection. "I always thought myself rather a good-looking bird but I never knew it would be taken literally!"

"Burks, when Patur sent you down here, did he give you any instructions? That is, did he tell you how to distinguish those pilgrims bound for Khoire possessing the knowledge—and the Sign?"

"He told me just to open the way for whoever comes."

"Do the words *va khoseth yaga* mean anything to you?"

The bird lifted a webbed foot from the water, examined it—critically lowered its head to tug on a scale with its curved beak. "No—should they?"

And, sharply, "You're not thinking you'll get me to fly up and yell for the steps to come down, are you? Patur told me to give you the brush-off for three years at least."

And, as Hibbert was silent, "Well—we all got what we asked for. I'm a bird and serving the Great Ones. Frank played the fool once too often—and that stupid, faithful Carlotta had to play it with him. You're so changed your own mother wouldn't know you and the bad leg's healed. The bulls will never grab you now to pin the murder rap on you. And you've got yourself a girl but you'll lose her unless you do the job cut out for you. That's your worry, not mine.

"Beat it—don't spoil my first moments as a flamingo! I'll be here a long, long while and I want pleasant memories to look back upon."

He thrust his bird's head far forward, pointing the way from the pool. He flapped his wings emphatically. There should have been something poetic and poignant in their parting, some symbolic word or action to seal away all the vanished beauty and terror of Khoire.

But the bird was Burks, no poet. And there in the cobalt moonlight, in the sorcery of the brooding shadows and the coiling luminous mist, amid the torch-dance of the fireflies—the blue bird beat its pinions and shrewishly shrilled, "Scram!"

Hibbert, loth to leave this last link with the world above, smiled sadly. "Right, Burks. Goodbye—and my best!"

Burks answered. "Same to you," and forgot him, intent on his own pleasures.

Hibbert swung to the battered steps of grey coral rock which led down to the night-bound garden. It was black with shadows, a ruined shaft of obsidian, a well of sorrows into which he must sink. Swampfire flamed green in the deep grass at its base. A limpkin shrilled eerily, the banshee to all his hopes.

Down the steps Hibbert went numbly. He plodded through the dark garden and the fern-brake beyond, found the canoe as it had been left among the mangroves only seven hours ago.

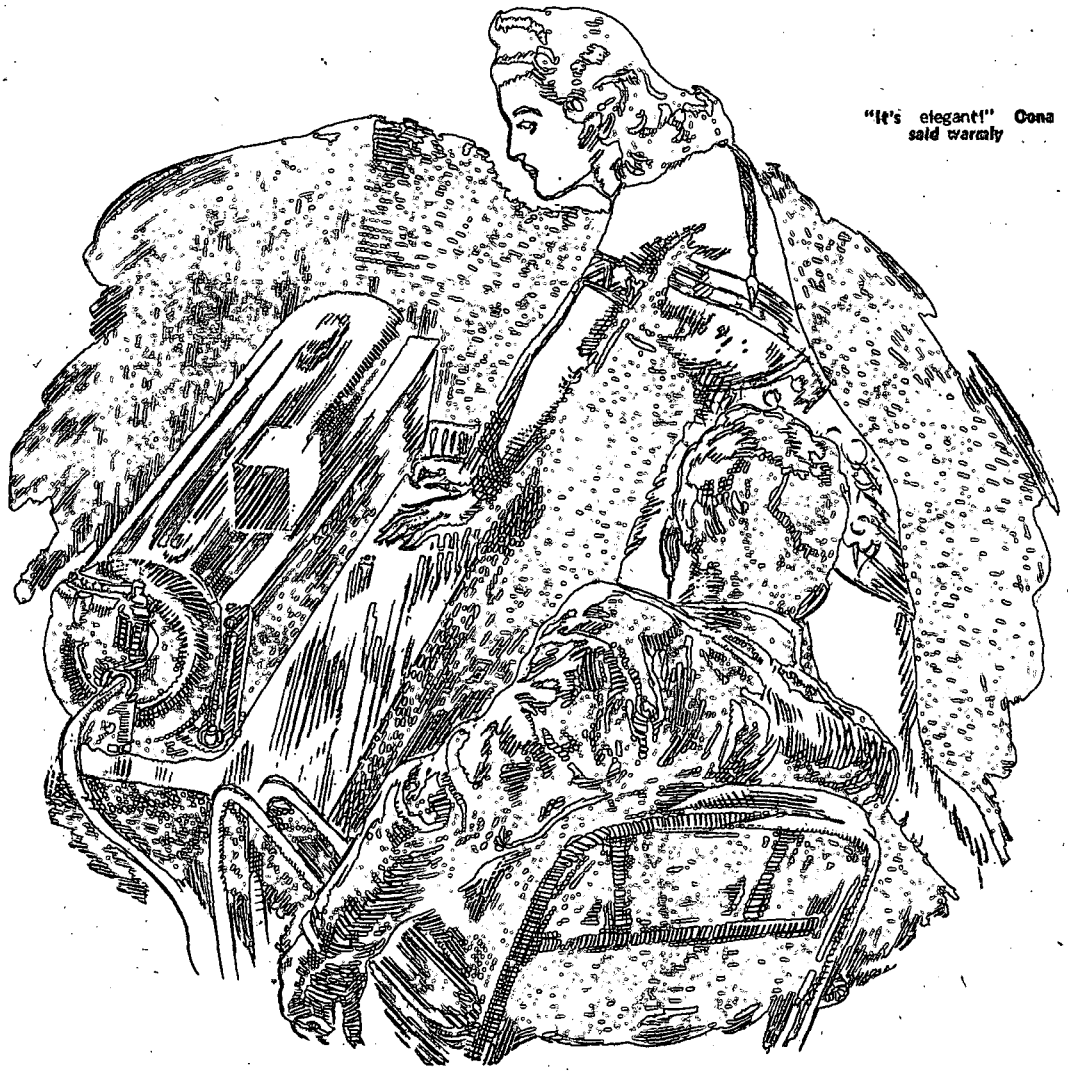
Seven hours! Yet, were he to seek duplication of their experiences on this plane of his birth, it would take him at least seven centuries!

He pushed the canoe to the water, his naked feet slipping on the chill mud. He climbed within and took up a paddle. The damp rank sweetness of the swamps rose into his nostrils. He looked back to the towering steps; palmettos hid them. And he wondered if, returning, he could find them ever again, doubted that even a passing airplane could spy them through their leafy screen.

The canoe was leaking, its water lapping his toes. Ah, yes—he and the others had pulled it ashore to repair it, so long ago! He glided downstream through the plaid fabric of thickening shadows and the blaze of the frigid moon. And, gliding, heard Mareth's voice as ever he must hear it through the long years impending:

"Va khoseth yaga!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"It's elegant!" Oona said warmly

ALEPH SUB ONE

By MARGARET ST. CLAIR

Seeking to improve her math via a robot calculator, future housewife Oona all but wipes out the world with a question!

"YES, but I don't understand what you mean by 'to ten as a base,'" Oona said doubtfully.

Jick sighed.

"It's perfectly simple, honey," he said. "Ordinarily logarithms are made to the base ten. Of course, it's not the only base possible. Napieran logs are done to the base E, which is a transcendental. But you don't need to worry your little head about *that*. The thing for you to try to remember is that the log of ten is one."

"One?" Oona replied.

She didn't know—sometimes she almost wished Jick would stop trying to teach her about mathematics. It was sweet of him to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

share his interests with her—gee, lots of husbands never spoke to their wives except to complain about the cooking—and he never made fun of her or got impatient when she couldn't understand.

In junior college he'd taken a lot of math, and though he'd never done anything with it after he got out, she knew it meant a lot to him. He had a whole shelf of books about it.

Only—well, Jick was as sweet as sugar, but was he really such a good teacher? He'd spent the quieter moments of their honeymoon (they had taken an inexpensive stratosphere trip around the world) trying to teach her about calculus.

Oona didn't know much about math, but wasn't that sort of advanced—especially as she'd only had half a term each of algebra and geometry in high school. And he explained everything, he explained all about everything right from the start clear through to the end. He explained so much she got mixed up listening to him.

"Well, if the log of ten is one, what number is it that has a log of two?" Jick asked, leaning forward and looking at her questioningly.

"A—a hundred?" Oona answered uncertainly.

Jick beamed. "I knew you'd get it," he said. "You're a smart girl. It was just a question of explaining it enough. Well, if the log of one hundred is two, what number is it whose log is three?"

"I—unh—two hundred?"

Jick sighed. The disappointed expression she so much disliked seeing on his face appeared again.

"No, honey, a thousand," he said gently.

There was a pause. "You know, Oona," Jick said thoughtfully, pinching his lower lip, "Austin was telling me about something that might help you."

Oona stiffened. She didn't much care for Austin. He was a teaching fellow in the math department at City College, perfectly respectable and polite and well-mannered and all that, but she didn't like his influence on Jick.

NOT that he led Jick into gambling or things like that—Oona might have been able to understand it better if he had. But every time Austin came to see them he arrived with a wild gleam in his eye and some sort of mathematical puzzle (Austin called them mathematical recreations) for Jick to work.

The last time he'd called he had kept Jick up two hours after midnight arguing with him over the solution, and Jick had had to go to work the next day with only four hours' sleep. She wished Austin would find some nice girl and get married and settle down.

"It's something the heads of the math and physics departments have been working on for the last seven years," Jick said. "Austin says it has the finest robot brain ever yet devised. At first it filled up the whole laboratory; now they've got it down to table size. It's called the Vizi-math."

"What does it do?" Oona asked. Usually she didn't talk much when Jick was explaining mathematics to her for fear she'd say something silly, but she could hardly go wrong with a question like that.

"As I understand it, they were trying to get a sort of super calculating machine, one that you could do cube root and the higher mathematical operations on easily. But what they finally came out with, Austin says, is the answer to the dumb student's prayer.

"You write any mathematical expression on a piece of paper, feed it into the machine—it has a scanner, of course—and watch the vizi-plate. What you get is a translation into visual terms of the mathematical expression you were interested in. Austin says he'd always been a little shaky about vector analysis, and the Vizi-math cleared the subject up for him in a way he wouldn't have thought possible."

"I don't see how it works," Oona said. What was it Jick had just said—that the Vizi-math translated mathematics into visual terms? So you could see it? Well, how could you see something that didn't exist, like that square root—minus one, it was—Jick had told her about once?

Jick laughed. "Neither does anyone else, honey," he said. "Austin says that some of the stuff you get on the vizi-plate in higher math almost frightens him. Uncanny, sort of.

"Last week he tried an expression with a transcendental and he got a big black spot on the vizi-plate and a lot of stars. But you don't need to worry about *that*. What we want is something to clear up the few simple things that bother you."

"Well. . . ." Oona said.

Austin brought the Vizi-math over the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

next day at noon.

"I had a lot of trouble getting Dr. Preeble to let me have it," he said as he carried his burden pantingly into the kitchen. "You'll be careful with it, won't you, Mrs. Ritterbush?"

"Oh, sure."

Austin cleared a place for the Vizi-math by sweeping his arm along the counter where the chronnox stood. A bottle of feijoa extract and two cans of spilal paste toppled and fell to the floor. Oona stooped to pick them up.

"I brought the Vizi-math in here," Austin explained, pulling the plugs of the chronnox out of the socket and inserting that of the Vizi-math, "because it has to go on an appliance circuit. It needs a lot of power. There. What do you think of it?"

Oona stepped back and looked at the thing. The machine was about three feet long, the shape of a rather plump cigar, and plated all over with some bright metal which had a faintly bluish cast. Oona didn't know why, but for some reason it reminded her of a coffin, a coffin for an abnormally small adult or a child.

She tried to think of something nice to say about it. "It certainly is scientific-looking," she brought out at last.

Austin nodded thoughtfully and rubbed his upper lip. "A great deal of research went into it," he observed. "Dr. Preeble was telling me this morning that he thinks it may mean the beginning of a new era in mathematics. Well. Would you like me to demonstrate it for you?"

"Um-hum."

"Mr. Ritterbush said you'd had trouble with the binomial expansion, eh?"

OONA nodded. She didn't remember it especially, but it was probably true. She had trouble with so many things.

On a piece of paper he got out of his pocket (Oona thought it looked like a laundry bill) Austin wrote:

$$(a+b)^2=a^2+2ab+b^2$$

He put the bit of paper into a small orifice on the front of the Vizi-math, pressed an inconspicuous button on the side, and said, "Now, watch."

A large section of the plating along the top of the Vizi-math became faintly luminous. The metal grew translucent, then transparent.

"The Vizi-plate's warming up," Austin said.

On the lighted surface two horizontal lines of unequal length appeared, one of them labeled *a*, the other *b*. They moved toward each other, joined. Three new lines, all labeled $a+b$, joined themselves at right angles to the original $a+b$ to make a square, corresponding *a* and *b* portions opposite on opposite sides.

From the points *ab* on each of the sides new lines moved at right angles toward the center. The original $a+b$ square was now divided into a small square, labeled b^2, a large one denominated a^2, and two rectangles bearing the legend *ab*.

While Oona watched, the Vizi-math went on with the visualization. It printed a^2 across the surface of the vizi-plate (the *a*-square became outlined in bright blue light) $+^2ab$ (the two rectangles were vividly outlined in red) $+b^2$ (the small *b*-square stood out in yellow light.

The four members of the $a+b$ square moved away from each other and came back together several times. The vizi-plate read $(a+b)^2=a^2+2ab+b^2$. The Vizi-math seemed to be determined that Oona got the idea.

She was watching almost open-mouthed. So *that* was what they meant when they talked about squaring a number. Not just multiplying it by itself, or whatever Jick had said, but turning it into an honest-to-goodness square, something a person could look at and understand.

Mathematics, then, wasn't just a lot of numbers and letters and foolishness. It meant something, and a mathematical expression was like a sentence with something to say.

"What do you think of it, Mrs. Ritterbush?" Austin asked.

Oona looked at him. She had to draw a deep breath before she could speak.

"It's *elegant*!" she said warmly. "It's simply the most zestful thing I ever saw! I'm glad you brought it. Gee, I had no idea it would be like *that*!"

Austin looked pleased. "Of course, that was a very simple example," he said modestly. "Let's try it with the cube."

He got another dog-eared bit of paper out of his pocket, scribbled on it for a moment, and passed it in to the machine. There was a pause, and then the lines *a* and *b* appeared once more. This time the square grew into

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a highly three-dimentional cube, very solid and real-looking. It wasn't, Oona thought, like the picture of a cube—there seemed to be a cube inside the machine.

The demonstration went on smoothly. When the Vizi-math had gone through its paces and the vizi-plate was opaque again, Oona, for the first time in her life, was clear about what $a^3+3a^2b+3ab^2+b^3$ meant.

"You get the general idea," Austin said at last. "When Mr. Ritterbush comes home tonight you can try anything else that bothers you."

Oona nodded radiantly. Her inability to follow Jick's patient explanations must have weighed on her mind more than she had realized. At any rate, now that she knew she *could* understand mathematical things after all, there was a sort of bubbling elation in her veins.

No more seeing Jick look so disappointed and hurt, no more listening to him talk, talk, talk, while she wondered what in the System he was talking about. From now on she'd take her troubles to the Vizi-math. For a moment she thought of giving Austin (though he had a face like a Venusian quohaug) a grateful, sisterly kiss, but decided against it. He wouldn't understand.

"Thanks a myriad," she said, "thanks ever so much."

After Austin had gone, she got a piece of paper, wrote on it, "What's a sine?" and turned it over to the Vizi-math.

She was a little doubtful whether the machine would work with that, because it wasn't really a mathematical expression at all, and it did seem that the Vizi-math sort of hesitated before it made up its mind.

But the visualization, when it came, was up to the quality of the other two, and the idea, once she got it, was so simple that Oona wondered why it had eluded her for so long.

She looked at the chronologue on her wrist. Oh, gee! According to the dial, today was the fifth, and she had an appointment at the beauty shop at 14:20. She'd have to hurry in order to make it.

BEING a verdette was an awful nuisance, Oona thought as she quickly sprayed and dried her face. Of course, the color was becoming to her, and it did look lovely when it was sprinkled lightly with dust of pearl. And all the fashion experts insisted that the "mermaid influence" was better than ever this season. But she was always having to have her hair bleached and regreened.

Sometimes she wished that women would go back to natural colored hair. But probably by now it would seem as old-fashioned and queer as it would if they stopped putting lacquer on their faces. No doubt by next year she'd be wearing her hair magenta or kingfisher blue.

She halted at the front door and looked at her chronologue again. Maybe it wouldn't matter if she *was* a little late for her appointment—she was a steady customer. And she did hate to go away without trying any more math on the machine in the kitchen. It was the most wonderful thing she'd ever seen in her life. She'd put one more expression in it, something with a lot of *a*'s and *n*'s and *e*'s, and see what she got.

She fetched a note-pad from the desk and began to write. Make it complicated, that was the idea. Jick had written so many equations for her when he was trying to teach her that she knew all kinds of things to put in the one she was making up, though she didn't know what most of them meant.

She wrote steadily for nearly five minutes, sprinkling her work liberally with *dx*'s, *nth* powers and a good many *e*'s, and then paused. It was all right so far, but she wanted a real clincher, something to make the Vizi-math hump itself. What would it be?

Oona went over to the shelf where Jick kept his math books and pulled one out. Yes, she had some of those wiggly things and one of those double *o*'s that looked like eyes. There must be something else.

She turned the page. Up at the top there was a peculiar looking sign, sort of like an *x*, with a zero under it. Jick had told her once that it was the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and added that a man named Cantor had invented it. Its name was *zalf* or *alpha* or something. She'd put that in her question, only with a one instead of a zero under it.

Oona added the *aleph* with its subscript to her work, followed it with an equals sign, and paused for inspiration. Equals what? Well, n^2 ought to be about right.

It looked pretty good, she thought, reading it over. But wasn't n^2 for the answer a little too vague? *N* ought to be something more definite. Under her equation, in her round, childish penmanship, she wrote $N=five$.

She hurried into the kitchen—moondust!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she was late—and fed her slip of paper into the Vizi-math. Gradually the vizi-plate warmed up. It turned a light tan. Short lines appeared momentarily on the surface and then vanished. In the upper corner a whirl of reddish colors spun and disappeared.

Very briefly, so briefly that Oona couldn't be sure whether she had really seen it or not, a thing like a cube, like a bunch of cubes, a thing that made her eyes smart, appeared. Perhaps she'd imagined it. Then the vizi-plate lost its tan coloring and became its ordinary self. The visualization seemed to be at an end.

Oona clicked her tongue in vexation. Was that going to be *all*? Here she'd made herself late for her appointment and everything—she'd have to fly the family 'copter instead of taking the bus, she was so late—just so she could see a few lines and a thing a little like a cube that probably hadn't been there at all. A few more times like this, and she was going to lose her confidence in the Vizi-math.

It occured to her as she set the 'copter down inexpertly on the roof of the beauty shop that what had happened wasn't entirely the mathematical machine's fault. She'd tried to make up an equation that would make it hump itself; she had simply succeeded too well. Her equation had stumped the Vizi-math. She'd made up something that couldn't be visualized.

Oona got through dreadfully late. The girl at the beauty shop had given her appointment to a Mrs. Nicker when Oona got there and Oona had had to wait until Mrs. Nicker was under the aridifier before she could get her own hair regreened. It was too bad. Jick would be home before her, and though she could get dinner in ten minutes, she knew how Jick disliked coming home to an empty house.

OONA piloted the 'copter to just over the hangarage, pressed the button that, by remote control, made the roof of the building below her open up, and looked into the periscope. O.K., but what was that blurry business off to the side of the house? Funny. She'd take a look when she got out.

Oona shut off the power receiver and stepped out of the 'copter. She opened the door in the side of the hangarage that led through into the house. The house wasn't there.

For a moment Oona couldn't take it in. She held on to the doorknob—her eyes wide open and her lips apart—and looked.

The house—their house, the house she and Jick had worked on so hard, the house they had just barely finished paying for—was gone. An unnatural reddish blur, a thing that rotated slowly and was shaped like the whirlpool you get when water runs out of the sink, seemed to have taken its place.

What had happened? Oona hadn't felt like this since the time they had called from the hospital to say that Jick had been hurt in an accident and when she'd asked how badly hurt the nurse had hesitated before she replied. What had happened, anyhow?

"'Lo, baby," a voice behind her said.

Oona whirled around. It was Jick; everything ought to be all right, now that he was here. Gee, she was glad to see him. She threw her arms around his neck.

"I'm *scared*," she said, her emerald tresses against his cheek. "What is it, Jick? What do you s'pose it is?"

He shook his head.

"Honey, I'm a little scared myself." He was silent for an instant, while Oona tipped back her head and looked at him. He seemed to be struggling with an idea. ". . . Did Austin bring over the Vizi-math, kid?"

The Vizi-math! Could it be—was it—? Oh, my gosh!

"Yes, he did," Oona replied.

"Hum. Unh—listen, Oona—unh—you didn't do anything to it, did you? Fool with the machinery or anything?"

Even through her makeup, Oona could feel herself turn red. It was unbecoming, but she didn't care. What kind of an idiot did he think she was? Fool with the machinery, for Pete's sake!

"I did *not*!" she said indignantly. "Austin brought it over and worked a couple of equations on it and then I asked it what a sine was. Then I put an equation in, but nothing much happened. Do you think it could be out of order, Jick? You said nobody knew how it worked."

"I don't think so—you say you put an equation in and nothing happened? You mean nothing at all?"

"Well, the vizi-plate got sort of tan and there were some lines on it and a sort of fancy thing like a cube that hurt my eyes. It just wasn't there at all, no time at all. It was an awfully looking thing."

"And that's all that happened. Um." Jick rubbed his forehead. "What was the equa-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion, dear?"

"Oh, it had all sorts of things in it. *X*'s and *d*'s and *e*'s and squiggly things. Oh, and I put a *zarf* in it with a number underneath."

"*Zarf?*"

"One of those signs you showed me once, like an *x*. Why? Do you think my equation had something to do with it?"

Jick ignored her question.

"We'd better get the 'copter out of here," he said, "that red stuff seems to be expanding. And I'm going to call Austin. This looks like something in his line."

Austin arrived as Jick was gulping down the last of the sandwich Oona had persuaded him to eat. He brought a whole bunch of people from the university with him, and they started an immediate conference in front of the reddish thing which had engulfed Oona's house. They walked about and shook their heads and wrote things in notebooks while Oona, standing first on one foot and then the other, watched them miserably.

Finally Mrs. McClure, who lived on down the street (a wonderful housekeeper—there wasn't a place in her house where you could relax), had taken pity on her and asked her to come in and try to rest. Oona had gone dutifully to bed, as Mrs. McClure suggested, but she couldn't get to sleep. She looked at her chronologue. It was nearly twenty-four.

JICK and Austin and the people from the university were carrying on their conference in Mrs. McClure's living room. A representative from the fire department and another from the city police were with them.

Through the closed louvers of Mrs. McClure's guest couchchamber Oona could see the reddish glow of the Vortex (that was what the people from the university were calling it).

The end of the street where Oona's house was—*had* been—was full of policemen, reporters, stereo-casters, and spectators. No wonder she couldn't get to sleep.

Dr. Preeble and Dr. Garth (the heads of the math and physics departments) had asked her over and over what had been in the equation she had put in the Vizi-math. She'd told them as well as she could remember, and they'd sighed and gone back to their eternal conference.

Oona put her arms under her head and stared up into the dark, trying to think. Was it her fault? She didn't honestly think it was. Jick and Austin—especially Austin—should have known better than to let her have the Vizi-math.

As she understood it, from what the scientists were saying, it was by the merest fluke that she'd made up an equation which had driven the Vizi-math, in its frantic attempt to visualize it, to creating a sort of superdimensional whorl. Dr. Preeble had said that that odd-looking cube affair she'd seen had been an instaneous tesseract. If that meant anything.

Yes, Austin was to blame. Still, Oona couldn't help feeling responsible. If only she hadn't put that *aleph* with the one under it in! She felt sure that it was the cause of all the trouble. And what was going to happen? Would the Vortex grow and grow until—well, until it swallowed up the world?

A little after two Jick came softly in the room. "Sorry to disturb you, sweetheart," he said, "but Preeble thinks we'd better evacuate this house. The Vortex has already expanded twice, and though they can't work out a formula for its expansion, it looks as if it might be logarithmic. Based on *e*."

Soggily, Oona began to put on her clothes.

"Have they found out any way to stop it yet?" she asked as she stepped into her brogans.

"Well, not just yet, but they're bound to, pretty soon. Any time now, Oona, any time."

Any time now, Oona thought sardonically late the next afternoon as she sat against the wall of the living room of the house (it belonged to a couple named Roux) Jick and the others were currently using as headquarters. Sure, any time now. Whenever they got around to it. Meantime, the Vortex had swallowed up an area six city blocks square and was expanding at unpredictable but frequent intervals.

Oh, they were doing all they could. They'd sprayed the Vortex with firehoses, sent volunteers (who hadn't been seen afterwards) into it, and tried to blow it up with dynamite. They had even got permission from the Security Council and dropped a small, carefully-shielded, atomic bomb. The Vortex had paid no attention of any kind to these attacks. It rotated slowly and kept on looking like the water running out of a sink.

The state police were there and so was an infantry company from the Fort. Jick had told her as he rushed by that the U.N. was sending a task force. It didn't make any difference: Oona hadn't a gram of confidence

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in any of them. If it was left up to them, the Vortex would swallow up the whole darned universe. They were dopes.

She walked over to the window and looked out. The glow from the Vortex had tinged the whole sky a sickly pink. She'd heard Dr. Grath say that by tomorrow the entire city would have been taken over by it. Meantime there they sat, talking their fool heads off.

Well. What was it her Aunt Nellie used to say? "For every evil under the sun, there is a remedy—" (the rhyme went on, "or there is none," but Oona wasn't going to think about that part of it.). What was the remedy for this evil.

Her equation, particularly that *aleph* with the one under it was the cause of everything, Oona felt sure. If there was only some way of canceling it out, of neutralizing it, of making it opposite to itself!

Oona halted in her thoughts, struck by a sudden idea. Here she'd been concentrating all the time on the *e*'s and *dx*'s, the *aleph* and infinity signs and so on in the *front* part of her equation, when after all the n^2 on the other side of the *equals* sign was every bit as important, maybe more so. What was it she had told the Vizi-math?—that *n* equalled *five*? Um. Well, what was the opposite of five?

This part was easy: Oona was sure what the answer was. Zero is the opposite of any number. Zero, then, is the opposite of five.

She opened her handcase and fished a notepad and stylo out of it. Using the handcase for a desk, she wrote:

I made a mistake. I'm sorry. *N* doesn't equal *five*. Zero (0) is what *n* is equal to.

Oona.

She looked over her production with a critical frown. She'd taken great pains to write clearly, so the Vizi-math couldn't possibly go wrong. But wasn't the signature a little informal for a note like this one?

She wrote "Ritterbush" after the "Oona" and, frowning still more, followed her last name with "Mrs." in parentheses.

There. Now all she had to do was to get the note into the Vortex.

IT MIGHT not be so easy. She was well within the evacuated area, and the bulk of the soldiers and policemen were stationed outside, to keep people from busting in to see what was going on.

Inside that area guards had been posted all around the Vortex about fifty feet apart. And if any of them suspected what she was trying to do, they'd stop her, of course.

She walked down the steps of the Roux house and sauntered toward the Vortex and the guards. One of them was rather nice, and he'd probably let her get up close.

How was she going to get her note in though? She thought for a moment of rolling it up around one of her earrings and tossing it in, but that wouldn't do; the Vizi-math might not be able to read it.

There was the same objection to folding the note into a dart, the way they had done it in school, and sailing it at the Vortex. What she needed was a long thin stick.

Wait a minute. Wasn't there a folding meterstick in her handcase? She'd bought it on Tuesday so she could get the hem straight on that frock she was making, and had forgotten to take it out of the case. What luck! Of course, it might ruin the meterstick, but this was no time to be economical.

"Howdy, Mrs. Ritterbush," the guard greeted her. "Come to look at our phenomenon? It's worth looking at."

"It certainly is," Oona agreed. Privately, she didn't think it was. She'd heard a stereo-caster referring to the Vortex as, "The red doom that rides across the western sky," but to her it just looked like a big red thing the shape of the water running out of the kitchen sink.

"Don't get too close. Say, do you know anything new from headquarters?"

Oona had managed to open the meterstick behind her back. Now, in a series of contortions she hoped the guard wasn't noticing, she attached the note with a paper-clip.

"They say the U.N. is sending specialists who are sure to stop it," she replied. "Look! Isn't that them coming now?" She pointed.

As the guard turned to see what she was pointing at, Oona hurled the meterstick, javelin-style, straight at the Vortex's edge.

As it met the line of red, there was an enormous, soundless flash. Oona later described it by saying that it was like seeing a noise or hearing a light. For a moment the universe seemed to wobble on the edge of an abyss. Then it appeared to shrug its shoulders and decide to settle down.

* * * * *

Later, after the commotion and the fuss had pretty much died away, after the photographers had taken dozens of pictures and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the stereo-casters had interviewed everybody, Oona went out in the kitchen to have another look at the Vizi-math.

She'd already been through the house and seen that everything was all right. Everything in the area the Vortex had covered *was* all right. The volunteers who had vanished in it turned up with no recollection whatever of the passage of time since they had walked into it, and Oona had found her meterstick.

But she wanted to take another look at the thing that had caused so much trouble before Austin came to take it away.

For a long moment Oona stared at the Vizi-math. Really, it was a sort of disappointing-looking thing. Wait, though. Wasn't there something on the floor in front of it?

Oona stooped over and scooped up the object on a piece of paper. She didn't much want to touch it, since it probably had come out of the Vizi-math.

What was it? She prodded it gingerly with the edge of one fingernail. It seemed like a lattice-work of cubes set at right angles to each other, and it was still faintly warm. Oona thought it looked like an attempt to make an ordinary model, in ordinary space, of that very extraordinary thing she had seen for an instant in the vizi-plate. A tesseract —wasn't that what Dr. Preeble had said?

It was perfectly plain what had happened. After she had thrown her note into the Vizi-math, it had gone to work visualizing the amended equation and had ended up with a model of a tesseract.

What should she do with it? After a moment Oona carried the tesseract, still on the piece of paper, to the bedroom. She got up on a chair in her closet and dropped the tesseract, paper and all, in a hatbox.

For the first week or ten days after she put it away, Oona thought about the tesseract all the time. It worried her; she supposed it was all right, but it *had* come out of the Vizi-math. But after a month or so had gone by, she thought about it less and less frequently. Jick had given up teaching her math and was trying to acquaint her with the rules of three-board chess.

Six months later she'd nearly forgotten it, and when she had a grand cleaning-out of the closet two years or so afterwards, she had to sit down and look at the tesseract before she could remember what it was.

Carhartt
FOR OVER 50 YEARS A FRIEND
TO ORGANIZED LABOR
When work clothes stand up for you, you should stand up for them. And when one family of overall makers has backed the cause of Union Labor so generously and whole heartedly for so many years—even contributed considerable money—you, as an American Labor Union member, should back those who helped you.
Three generations of the Carhartt family have supported Labor Unions. They have proved by example in their own mills and shops that the Union label can be the badge of finer workmanship and sounder values. Insist on union made Carhartt Overalls. They're better built for longer wear.
MAKERS OF
Blue Denim, Brown Duck, White Sailcloth Overalls,
Dungarees, Washable Work Caps
HAMILTON CARHARTT OVERALL COMPANY
Established 1889
Detroit Atlanta Dallas Carhartt Park, Irvine, Ky
CARHARTT'S
UNION MADE OVERALLS

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Conquest of Two Worlds

By EDMOND HAMILTON

In this outstanding Hall of Fame novelet, Earthmen prove once more that the only way to prevent the grim terror of mass murder is through universal law backed up by force!

CHAPTER I

Interplanetary Exploration

JIMMY CRANE, Mart Halkett and Hall Burnham were students together in a New York technical school in the spring of 1962 when Gillen's flight changed the world. Crane, Halkett and Burnham had been an inseparable trio since boyhood. They had fought youthful foes together, had wrestled together with their lessons, and now read together, as an amazed world was reading, of Ross Gillen's stupendous exploit.

Gillen, the stubby, shy and spectacled Arizona scientist, burst the thing on the world like a bombshell. For sixteen years he had worked on the problem of atomic power. When he finally solved that problem and found himself able to extract almost unlimited power from small amounts of matter, by breaking down its atoms with a simple projector of electrical forces of terrific voltage, Gillen called in a helper, Anson Drake. With Drake he constructed an atom-blast mechanism that would shoot forth as a rocket stream, exploded atoms of immeasurable force, a tremendous means of propulsion.

For Gillen meant to conquer space. Through that momentous winter of 1961, when Crane, Halkett and Burnham had not a thought beyond their school problems and school sports, Gillen and Drake were constructing a rocket that would use the atom-blast mechanism for propulsion and could carry one man and the necessary supplies of air, food and water. There was installed in the ship a radio transmitter they had devised, which made use of a carrier-beam to send radio impulses through the earth's Heaviside Layer from outer space. When all was ready Ross Gillen got calmly into the rocket and roared out into space to eternal glory.

Crane, Halkett and Burnham read as tensely as everyone else on earth the reports that came back from Gillen's radio. He swung sunward first and reported Venus a landless water-covered ball, and Mercury a mass of molten rock. Landing was impossible on either. Then Gillen headed outward in a broad curve for Mars and on a memorable day reported to earth a landing on that planet.

Mars had thin but breathable air, Gillen reported. It was an arid world of red deserts with oases of gray vegetation wherever there were underground springs or water-courses. There were Martians of some intelligence moving in nomadic groups from oasis to oasis. They were manlike beings with stilt-like legs and arms, with huge bulging chests and bulbous heads covered with light fur. Gillen said the Martian groups or tribes fought some among themselves with spears and like weapons, but that they welcomed

EDITOR'S NOTE

SOME stories are forgotten almost as soon as they are printed. Others stand the test of time.

Because "The Conquest of Two Worlds," by Edmond Hamilton has stood this test, it has been nominated for SCIENTIFICTION'S HALL OF FAME and is reprinted here.

In each issue we will honor one of the most outstanding fantasy classics of all time as selected by our readers.

We hope in this way to bring a new permanence to the science fiction gems of yesterday and to perform a real service to the science fiction devotees of today and tomorrow.

Nominate your own favorites! Send a letter or postcard to The Editor, STARTLING STORIES, 10 East 40th St., New York 16, N. Y. All suggestions are more than welcome!

Copyright, 1931, by Gernsback Publications, Inc.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stilt-limbed, huge-chested Martians moved about bewildered by the activity around them

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him as a friend. He reported signs of large mineral and chemical deposits before he left Mars.

Gillen's radio signals became ever weaker as his rocket moved through space toward Jupiter. He managed a safe landing on that giant planet and found it without oceans, warm and steamy and clad from pole to pole with forests of great fern growths. A strange fauna inhabited these forests and the highest forms of life. The Jovians, as Gillen called them, were erect-walking creatures with big, soft hairless bodies and with thick arms and legs ending in flippers instead of hands or feet. Their heads were small and round, with large dark eyes. They lived peacefully in large communities in the fern forests, on fruits and roots. They had few weapons and were of childlike friendliness. Gillen stayed several days with them before leaving Jupiter.

Gillen said only that Jupiter's greater gravitation and heavy, wet atmosphere had made him ill and that he was heading back to earth. Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto were, of course, hopelessly cold and uninhabitable.

CRANE, Halkett and Burnham were part of a world that was mad with excitement as Gillen swung back through space toward earth. And when at last Gillen's rocket roared in through earth's atmosphere and landed, it smashed, and they found Gillen inside it crumpled and dead, but with a smile on his lips.

To Halkett, Crane and Burnham, Gillen was the supreme hero as he was to all earth. Overnight, Gillen's flight, the fact of interplanetary travel, changed everything. The new planets open to earthmen brought new and tremendous problems.

Even as Anson Drake, Gillen's helper, was supervising construction of ten rockets for a second expedition, the world's governments were meeting and deciding that a terrific war between nations for the rich territories of Mars and Jupiter could only be avoided by formation of one government for the other planets. The Interplanetary Council thus came into being and one of its first acts was to make Drake's expedition its official exploring party.

Drake's expedition became the goal of all the adventure-minded young men of earth. Jimmy Crane, Mart Halkett and Hall Burnham were among these, but they had what most of the adventurous had not, technical education and skill. The harassed Drake took the three on; and when Drake's ten rockets sailed out with the commission of the Interplanetary Council to explore Mars' mineral and other resources, to establish bases for future exploration on Mars and if possible on Jupiter, Crane, Halkett and Burnham were together in Rocket 8.

Drake's expedition proved a classic in disaster. Two of his ten rockets perished in midspace in a meteor swarm. Many of the men in the other rockets were struck down by the malign combination of the weightlessness, the unsoftened ultra-violet rays, and the terrific glare and gloom of mid-space. This space-sickness had put about half of Drake's men out of usefulness, Halkett and Burnham among them, by the time his eight rockets swung in to land near the Martian equator.

One of Drake's rockets smashed completely in landing, and three others suffered minor damages. They had landed near one of the oases of vegetation, and Drake directed the establishment of a camp. The thin cold Martian air helped bring his space-sick men back to normal, but others were being smitten at the same time by what came to be known later as Martian fever. This seized on Hall Burnham among others, though Halkett and Crane never had it.

Drake's men were in a world in which nothing could be measured by terrestrial standards. The reduced gravitation made their slightest movements give grotesquely disproportionate results. But the thin air made even the slightest effort tire them quickly. The sun's heat was enough by day to give moderate warmth, but the nights in Drake's camp were freezing. Halkett, Crane and Burnham marveled at the splendor of those nights, the stars superb in frosty brilliance, the two Martian moons casting ever-changing shadows.

Then, too, there were the Martians. The first contact of Drake's party with them was amicable enough. The big, furry manlike beings, strange looking to the earthmen with their huge expanded chests and stiltlike limbs, emerged from the vegetation oases to greet Drake's men as friends.

Drake welcomed the Martians and ordered his men to fraternize with them, for he hoped to learn much from them concerning the planet's resources. He was beginning to see that his expedition was far too small for even the sketchiest exploration of the planet. So Martians and earthmen mixed and mingled in the little camp at the oasis' edge. Some of the men learned the rudiments of the Martians' speech—Mart Halkett was one of these—and got from them a little information concerning location of mineral deposits.

But the whole state of affairs changed when one of Drake's men foolishly told some Martians that Drake's expedition was but the forerunner of many others from earth, and that the Interplanetary Council would direct the destinies of all the planets. It must have been a shock to the Martians, primitive as they were, to find that they were considered

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

subjects of this new government. They withdrew at once from the earthmen's camp. Drake radioed to earth that they were acting queerly and that he feared an attack.

Yet when the attack came three days later the earthmen brought it on themselves. When one of Drake's guards wantonly slew a Martian, the natives rushed the camp. Drake had hastily made ready atom-blast mechanisms for defense, and the attacking Martians were almost annihilated by the invisible but terrific fire of disintegrated atoms.

The Martians had learned their lesson and attacked no more, but hemmed in the camp and systematically trailed and killed anyone venturing from it. More of Drake's men were going down with Martian fever and several died. Exploration was out of the question and Drake's position became insupportable. He reported as much and the Interplanetary Council ordered his return to earth.

Drake foolishly sent four of his rockets, with Halkett and his friends in one, back to earth in advance. The other three and their crews, including himself, delayed to repair the damage done in landing. The Martians rushed them in force that night, and Drake and all his men perished in what must have been a terrific battle.

HALKETT, Crane and Burnham got back to earth with the four advance rockets some time after Drake's last broken-off-radio-messages had told his fate. They found earth, which welcomed them as heros, wrathful at the slaying of their commander and comrades by the Martians. The information Drake had sent back regarding Mars' rich chemical and metallic deposits added greed to the earth-people's anger.

Announcement was made immediately by the Interplanetary Council that another force would be sent back to Mars, one better equipped to face Martian conditions and powerful enough to resist any Martian attack. It was evident that the Martians would resist all explorations and must be subdued before a systematic survey of the planet could be made. Once that was done, Mars would become a base for the exploration of Jupiter.

Rockets to the number of a hundred were under construction, embodying all the lessons Drake's disastrous expedition had learned. Instruments, to give warning of meteor swarms by means of magnetic fields projected ahead, were devised. Walls and window ports were constructed to soften the terrific ultra-violet vibrations of free space. Special recoil harnesses were produced to minimize the terrible shocks of starting and landing. These would reduce space-sickness, and Martian fever was to be combatted by special oxygenation treatment to be given periodically to all engaged in this new venture.

Weapons were not forgotten—the atom-blast weapons were improved in power and range, and new atomic bombs that burst with unprecedented violence were being turned out. And while crews were being enlisted and trained for this rocket fleet, the Army of the Interplanetary Council was organized. Most of the survivors of Drake's disastrous expedition joined one department or another of the new force. Crane, Halkett and Burnham had joined at once, and because their Martian experience made them valuable they were commissioned lieutenants in the new army.

Halkett commented on that. "I don't know why we should be going back there to kill those poor furry devils," he told Crane and Burnham. "After all, they're fighting for their world."

"We wouldn't hurt them if they'd be reasonable and not attack us, would we?" Crane demanded. "We're only trying to make of Mars something beside a great useless desert."

"But the Martians seem to be satisfied with it as a desert," Halkett persisted. "What right have we, really, to change it or exploit its resources against their wishes?"

"Halk, if you talk like that people'll think you're pro-Martian," said Crane worriedly. "Don't you know that the Martians will never use those chemical and metal deposits until the end of time, and that earth needs them badly?"

"Not to speak of the fact that we'll give the Martians better government than they ever had before," Burnham said. "They've always been fighting among themselves, and the Council will stop that."

"I suppose that's so," Halkett admitted. "But just the same, I'm not keen on slaughtering any more of them."

"There'll be nothing like that," Crane told him. "The Martians will see we're too strong and won't start anything."

Crane proved a poor prophet. For when the expedition, commanded by that Richard Weathering who had been Drake's second in command, reached Mars in its hundred rockets, fighting with the Martians began almost immediately.

It was evident that since Drake's expedition the Martians had anticipated further parties and had made some preparation. They had combined groups into several large forces and had devised some crude chemical weapons not unlike the ancient Greek fire. With these they rushed Weathering's rockets on the equatorial plateau where they had landed. But Weathering's first act on landing had been to have his men bring the rockets

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

together and throw up dirtworks around them. Both of these tasks were enormously simplified by the lesser gravitation of the planet.

He had then set up batteries of atom-blasts at strategic locations behind his works, Jimmy Crane commanding one of these and Halkett another.

These opened on the Martians as soon as they came into range. The furry masses, unable to use their rather ineffective chemical weapons, were forced to fall back with some thousands dead.

They immediately tried to hem in the earthmen as they had done with the Drake expedition.

Weathering did not permit this. He knew that the Martians' source of existence was the gray vegetation of the oases. This vegetation was mostly a sage shrub which bore podlike fruits about the time the polar snow-caps reappeared.

Weathering sent parties forth, with Lieutenant Jimmy Crane heading one, to devastate the oases for a hundred miles around the earth-post.

THEY carried out orders though the Martians in those oases made fierce resistance, and there were mad combats of brown-clad earthmen and furry Martians in brilliant sunlight of day or black, freezing night. But Crane's and the other parties went stubbornly ahead, destroying the vegetation with atom-blasts.

And in the end, with the vegetation that yielded their food-supply destroyed, the Martians in that hundred-mile circle had to retire across the red desert to other oases.

Weathering then split his forces into three divisions using his rockets to transport two of these divisions to points equidistant around Mars' equator. At each point a post like Weathering's own was established, with dirtworks in a square around it and atom-blast batteries mounted. Jimmy Crane, who had shown aptitude thus far in Martian campaigning, was made commander of one of these ports and a Lieutenant Lanson commander of the other.

Halkett and Burnham stayed in Weathering's own post.

Eighty of the ninety-seven rockets that had landed safely, Weathering now sent back to earth for more men and supplies. Word came from earth that fifty new rockets had been constructed and were on their way with men and materials. Weathering distributed them equally among his three posts when they came and sent the rockets back to earth for more. Crane and Lanson, under his orders, had devasted the oases around their posts to drive the Martians back from them.

CHAPTER II

The Conquest of Mars

WEATHERING'S men were becoming acclimated to Martian conditions. The oxygenation treatments eliminated most of the Martian fever, and as the earthmen's muscles attuned themselves gradually to the new gravitation their movements became more sure.

As reinforcements came in, Weathering continued to distribute them among the three posts of Crane and Lanson and himself, for the Martian attacks were growing fiercer and they seemed to be preparing a concerted attack to wipe out the earthmen's three forts before they became too strong.

The attack broke against the three forts, so widely separated, at the same time. It did not catch Weathering and Crane and Lanson by surprise—their atom-blasts were ready. But even so, the Martians attack was almost irresistible in sheer weight. From far across the reddish desert surged the furry masses toward the three little forts, coming on despite the atom-blasts that took toll of them by tens of thousands.

Weathering's post and that of Crane withstood the attack by only the utmost endeavor. Halkett had charge of one of the atom-blast batteries at Weathering's fort, on the side that the Martians attacked most determinedly, and it was Halkett's battery that wrought the deadliest destruction amid the furry hordes.

The third post, that of Lanson, fell. The Martians got inside with their chemical weapons despite the atom-blasts and bombs of the earthmen. Lanson and his garrison were massacred to the last man by the Martians. Only one of the three rockets stationed at Lanson's post escaped, a little before the fort fell, and got to Weathering with the news.

Weathering acted at once, despite his own precarious situation. He assembled sixteen rockets from his fort and Crane's, loaded them with men and weapons, and sent them under the command of Mart Halkett to reestablish the third fort. They did so, taking the Martians there by surprise, and managed to hold the place in the face of the Martian attacks that followed.

Steadily the earthmen's strength grew as more rockets came in. Earth was aflame over the situation, cheering Weathering as the upholder of terrestrial honor. The gallant fight of earth's lonely outposts there amid the Martian hordes had appealed to the popular imagination, and there were insistent de-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mands that the Interplanetary Council use its power to reinforce them.

It meant to do so. It sent Weathering a message stating as much, advancing him from colonel to general, promoting Jimmy Crane to colonel, and Halkett and Burnham and a number of others to captaincies. The enlistment bureaus of the Council on earth could not handle the flood of recruits.

Rockets were now pouring from the factories in a steadily increasing stream. Atomic weapons were also being produced in quantity and every few days saw rockets laden with supplies and men taking off for Mars. Many perished still in the dangers of the void but most arrived safely.

When the three forts were strong enough to be impregnable to any Martian attack, Weathering began the establishment of new posts. He proceeded methodically to dot Mars with small but strong forts, each covering a certain portion of the planet's surface. Hall Burnham was made commander of one of the first of these, Crane and Halkett retaining command of their posts.

Within a year Weathering had a network of fifty forts stretched over Mars' surface from the north polar snow-cap to the southern one. He had in them strong garrisons of bronzed earthmen thoroughly acclimated to the Martian gravitation and atmosphere, and well-seasoned in fighting with the stilt-limbed Martians. By then Halkett and Burnham were commanding two of the fifty forts, while Jimmy Crane was now Weathering's second in command. The two worked together distributing, according to their plan, among the fifty posts, the streams of men and materials arriving from earth.

WITH the next melting of the polar snow-caps, Weathering was ready to begin the final subjugation of Mars. From a circle of six of his forts he sent out strong forces to attack and drive together the Martians in that circular territory. This was the plan evolved by Weathering and Crane, to concentrate forces upon one section of the planet at a time, using the forts around that section as bases, mopping up the Martians in that section thoroughly and then proceeding to another.

Crane had charge of the first operation, and it worked perfectly. The Interplanetary Council had directed Weathering to offer the Martians peace if they promised to obey the Government's authority. But Crane's men had no chance even to make the offer, so utterly fierce was the Martian resistance.

The Martians had never expected what happened. The furry, stilt-limbed men had ceased their attacks on the earthmen's forts some time before, save for occasional raids, and had retired to take up existence in the vegetation oases remoter from the forts. There they had lived as they had for ages, moving in nomadic fashion through the oases gathering the fruits upon which they subsisted, digging, as ages of experience had made them skillful in doing, for the underground springs. Now the earthmen were attacking them. The Martians rose madly to the fight.

But Crane's forces were strongly armed and with atom-blasts and atom-bombs against their crude weapons the Martians had no chance. Those in that section were mostly killed in the fighting and the few remaining were herded into prison camps. Crane went on under Weathering's order to another section and repeated the maneuver.

Within another year Weathering could send word back to the Council that the plan had succeeded and that except for a few remote wastes near the snow-caps, Mars was entirely subjugated. In that year approximately three-forths of the Martian race had perished, for in almost every case their forces had resisted to the last. Those who remained could constitute no danger to the earthmen's system of forts. The Council flashed Weathering congratulations and gave Crane command of the expedition then fitting out at earth for the exploration of Jupiter.

Crane went back to earth to take charge of it, first taking warm leave of Mart Halkett and Hall Burnham at the posts they commanded. Crane spent a half-year on earth preparing his expedition of two hundred rockets to meet conditions on Jupiter. For Jupiter presented a greater problem to earth explorers than had Mars, and biologists and chemists had been working to overcome the obstacles.

The greatest difficulty, Crane saw, was Jupiter's gravitation, almost twice that of earth despite the swift-spinning planet's counteracting centrifugal force. Gillen's visit to Jupiter on his special flight had been terminated by sickness brought on by that greater gravitation and the heavy damp atmosphere. Crane's men must be strengthened to withstand these influences.

Earth's scientists solved the problem to some extent by devising rigid metallic clothing not unlike armor which would support the interior human structure against Jupiter's pull. Crane's men were also administered compounds devised by the biochemists for the rapid building of bone to strengthen the skeleton structure, while respirators which absorbed a percentage of the water vapor in air would solve for Crane's men the problem of the heavy wet atmosphere.

So equipped, Crane's expedition sailed in its two hundred rockets for Jupiter, choosing a time when the asteroid zone between earth

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Jupiter was comparatively clear. Even so, sixteen of the two hundred rockets never reached their destination.

The others landed safely in the fern forests of the southern half of Jupiter, and Crane began there establishment of the first earth-post.

He found himself with troubles enough. For though the metal armor and other protections safeguarded the earthmen fairly effectively from the greater gravitation, they found it still difficult to make the simplest motions.

It took weeks for Crane's men, against the drag of the Jovian gravity, to clear the fern forest around them and turn up dirt-works of the oozy black Jovian soil.

Sickness was rife among them, for the respirators did not work as well as the safeguards against gravitation. The heavy wet air worked havoc with the earthmen's lungs and the so-called Jovian croup became soon as well-known and much more feared than Martian fever. Men toiling in the thin sunlight were stricken by it. Crane's forces were decimated by it. The fern forests, too, held weird forms of life that proved a problem, some of them disk-shaped things of flesh that enveloped anything living in their bodies and ingested it directly. There were also strange huge wormlike things existing in the oozy soil, and others stranger still. Crane's men had to work with atom-blasts constantly ready to repel these strange predatory forms of life.

Out of the fern forests, too, came to watch the earthmen hosts of the big, soft-bodied creatures Gillen had called the Jovians. These had bodies eight feet high and six feet around, like big cylinders of hairless brown flesh supported on thick flipper-like limbs, with similar flipper-like arms. Their small round heads had dark mild eyes and mouths from which came their deep bass speech. Crane found they were perhaps as intelligent as the Martians but were rather more peaceful, their only weapons spears with which they fought off the things in the fern forests that attacked them.

They were quite friendly toward the earthmen and watched their operations with child-like interest. Crane intended to avoid Drake's mistake and not clash with the Jovians in any way while his men toiled to establish first one port and then others over southern Jupiter. He reported to the Council that he would only operate in South Jupiter for the time being. And while earth followed Crane's work on South Jupiter with intense interest, a host of changes were occurring on Mars.

MART HALKETT, still commanding his equatorial Martian post, saw a new kind of migration going on from earth to Mars. Hitherto the rockets had carried hardly anything but the reinforcements of the Council and their supplies. But now Halkett saw crowds of civilians pouring into the newly subjugated planet. They were magnates, speculators, engineers, mechanics, for the Council was now granting concessions in the great Martian mineral and chemical deposits.

Halkett saw those forts nearest the deposits, including his own, grow rapidly into raw mine towns packed with earthmen of all kinds. Martian fever had been completely conquered by earth's scientists and some of these crude new towns contained thousands of earthmen. There could be seen among them occasional stilt-limbed, huge-chested Martians moving about as though bewildered by the activity about them. But most of the remaining Martians were on certain oases set aside for them as reservations. Refining and extracting plants were set up as mining operations grew, and Halkett saw the rocket fleets that arrived with men and machinery going back to earth laden with metals and chemicals.

Halkett went up to Burnham's post in northern Mars sick at heart. He told Burnham he had secured a transfer to Jupiter to serve there in Jimmy Crane's expanding system of forts.

"I can't stand this any longer, Burn," he said. "I mean what we've done to this world—the Martians, its people, almost wiped out and those left treated in the way that they are."

Burnham looked keenly at him. "You're taking it too hard, Halkett," he said. "It's been a tough time, I admit, but that's all over now the Martians are conquered."

"Conquered—wiped out, I say again," Halkett said bitterly. "Burnham, I dream about it sometimes—those waves of furry stilt-men coming on and on toward certain death, and my atom-blasts mowing them down like grass."

"They had to be conquered," Burnham argued. "Isn't it worth it? Look at all this planet's resources thrown open to real use now instead of lying unused."

"Thrown open to a lot of speculators and financiers to extract a profit from," Halkett amended. "The Martians are killed off and we do the dirty work of killing them and all for what? So this bunch swarming into Mars now can enrich themselves."

"That's too narrow a view," Burnham told him. "It's inevitable that there'll be certain evils during the course of an expansion like this."

"Why expand then?" asked Halkett. "Why not stay on our own planet and let these poor devils of Martians and Jovians keep theirs?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Burnham shook his head. "Expansion is as inevitable as a full tank overflowing into an empty one. Anyway, Halk, the fighting's over here now so why go on to Jupiter?"

"Because I feel like a murderer haunting the scene of his crime," Halkett told him. "When I see some of these degraded Martians hanging around our towns, begging for food and getting cuffed and kicked out of the way by earthmen, I want to get out of here to I don't care where."

Halkett went on to Jupiter. He found by then Crane had established a dozen posts over the southern half of the vast planet, following Weathering's Martian system. Jovian croup was giving Crane more trouble than anything else and the dreaded disease was often fatal, the death list sometimes appalling while the earth scientists worked frantically to control the disease. They finally succeeded in evolving a serum which was an effective preventive. Halkett was inoculated with this immediately on reaching Jupiter.

HALKETT found that Crane was, despite the difficulties, strengthening his system of posts as reinforcements arrived constantly from earth.

He had been successful in avoiding trouble with the Jovians so far.

Crane commented on the Jovians to Halkett that night after the latter's arrival. The two had been outside the post and Halkett had met the Jovians for the first time, the big, soft-eyed flippermen clustering around him like interested children. Now he and Crane sat in Crane's lamplit office, whose windows looked out across the post to the mighty wall of the surrounding fern forest. Halkett could hear the calls and screams of the forest's various weird tenants, and could see its steamy mists rising into the light of two moons then in the sky, Callisto and Europa.

"These Jovians aren't a bad bunch, Halk," Colonel Jimmy Crane told his friend. "They seem too mild to give us any real trouble, though no one knows how many millions of them there are."

He was enthusiastic about Jupiter's possibilities.

"I tell you, this is the planet of the future. Stick a seed in the ground and in a week you've a tree—this planet will be supporting trillions of humans some day when earth and Mars are overcrowded."

"Where will the Jovians be when that day arrives?" Halkett asked him. Crane looked at him.

"Still holding to that viewpoint? Halkett, we have to let some things take care of themselves. Be sure we'll not harm the Jovians if they don't try harming us."

CHAPTER III

Jupiter Next!

BUT trouble came soon after Halkett's arrival. Crane had been engaged in strengthening his dozen posts scattered over the southern half of Jupiter.

It began as on Mars—a bad-tempered earthman at one of the forts beat a flipperman for some reason and in a brawl that ensued one earthman and five Jovians were killed. Word must have spread somehow in the fern forest, for the Jovians retired from the forts of the earthmen. Jimmy Crane cursed in private, but acted, punishing the earthmen concerned and sending Halkett to the Jovian communities to patch up matters.

Halkett had learned the Jovian language and proved a good ambassador for he was sympathetic with the flipper-men. The flipper-men told Halkett that they had no hard feelings but would prefer to avoid the earthmen lest further trouble develop.

Halkett went back with this word and Crane realized that trouble was ahead. He flashed word back to the Interplanetary Council and it ordered him to hold all his posts and await reinforcements from earth and Mars. Weathering would send on most of the Martian divisions of the Council's army as rapidly as possible.

Soon after the arrival of the first reinforcements, the storm broke. The Jovians had come to see, despite Halkett's attempt at reassurance, what Crane's expanding system of posts would mean in time. They sent to Crane asking from him a promise that no more earthmen would come to Jupiter. Crane curtly refused to make such a promise. Even so the flipper-men might have remained inactive had not by some inconceivable brutality an atom-blast been turned upon their envoys as they left the fort. Crane's summary execution of the men responsible for the action could not mend matters.

For the Jovians, aroused at last, rose upon the earthmen. Over all South Jupiter they poured out of the fern forests in incalculable masses upon the forts of the earthmen. They had not even the crude chemical weapons the Martians had used, their only arms spears and great maces, but there were tens of thousands of them to every earthman. Crane set himself grimly to hold his dozen posts against the floods of the flipper-men.

He had given Halkett command of one of the posts on the other side of South Jupiter. Halkett gripped himself and used all his experience to hold the post. He fought as all of Crane's twelve posts were fighting, to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hold back the endless Jovian masses. The atom-blasts scythed them down, the atom-bombs burst in terrific destruction among them, but the Jovians came on to the attack with a sort of mild but resolute determination.

One of Crane's twelve posts they did indeed take. A strange sidelight on the nature of the Jovians is that after losing hundreds of thousands in the long attack on the fort, they contented themselves with razing it to the ground when they had captured it and holding the earthmen in it prisoners. There was no massacre as had been the case on Mars. Crane, however, managed with the coming of further reinforcements to reestablish the fort.

The tide was turning in the earthmen's favor. Every day brought in new rockets of men and supplies to Crane, and the flipper-men could not face the atom-blasts and bombs forever, even with their incalculable numbers. Their attacks died away as the twelve forts grew stronger, and they retired into the great forests. Any parties venturing from the forts they fell upon. It was the same situation as on Mars three years before, and Crane dealt with it in the same way. Halkett was one of his own aids now, and so too was Hall Burnham who had come on from Mars with the reinforcements.

Crane held his hand until he had strengthened his twelve posts beyond danger of attack, then established at gradual intervals no less than ninety more posts in a network around South Jupiter. Then he went ahead to conquer it section by section as he had planned. It was a herculean undertaking for the earthmen.

Their greatest obstacle was not the Jovians themselves, who could offer no effective resistance to the atom-blasts and bombs of Crane's men, but the terrible Jovian gravity that made each movement an effort.

Yet in section after section the division of Crane's mobile forces, Halkett and Burnham among their commanders, crashed through the steamy fern forests with atom-blasts and drove the Jovians slowly but resistlessly until they were hemmed in and brought to action. There were fights of terrific fury in the green twilight of the huge damp forests, for few of the Jovians surrendered.

CRANE'S grip upon South Jupiter tightened with each section subjugated by the superhuman endeavors of his men. He flashed word to the Interplanetary Council that his plan was following schedule. He was conquering subjugated territories, the larger Jovian masses. Then in the midst of this tremendous task occurred an astonishing incident, one that made earth first incredulous and then wrathful. Halkett became a traitor.

The first reports of Halkett's treachery that got back to earth were confused and contradictory. Later ones state that Captain Halkett was under guard in one of the South Jupiter posts. He had been the cause of a large Jovian force escaping. That was all that was known certainly at first.

Then came details. Three forces under Halkett and Burnham and an officer named James had been operating against the Jovians in that section. Halkett commanded a heavy atom-blast battery and Burnham and James had been driving the Jovian forces toward it. For a score of the short Jovian days and nights the men of Burnham and James had pushed the Jovians in the desired direction, toiling against the relentless gravitation's drag, through the endless fern forests they had to cut through and against the weird beasts they dislodged from those forests. They had without question done their part against the Jovians.

But Halkett had not. He had deliberately ordered his men not to fire on the Jovians and the flipper-men had escaped past him. Earth could hardly credit the news. There came from soldiers and civilians alike a swift demand for Halkett's punishment. The Council ordered Crane to send Halkett home for court-martial.

Crane told Halkett that in the guard house on South Jupiter, and told him much more for he was half-crazed with the thing.

"Halk, how could you have done it?" he kept saying. "I've got to send you back now and goodness knows what a court-martial will do to you with feeling against you so strong on earth."

"Don't worry about it, Crane," said Halkett steadily. "I did as I wanted, and I'm willing to take my medicine."

"But why did you do it?" Crane demanded for the hundredth time. "Halkett, if you'll only plead that you didn't know the Jovians were coming through—that it was some kind of blunder—"

Hall Burnham seconded him. "A blunder on your part would lose you your commission, but you'd escape a sentence," he told Halkett. "Surely it was partly that, at least."

Halkett shook his head. "It wasn't. I can't explain just what it was, why I did it—but if you'd have seen those Jovians coming through the forest there, weary, terrorized, hunted onward for days yet somehow unresentful—I couldn't turn the atom-blasts loose on them!"

Crane made a gesture. "Halkett, I understand what you felt but even so you shouldn't have done it. I'd go back with you to earth for the trial but I can't leave here now."

"It's all right, Jimmy," Halkett told him.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm willing to take what comes."

Halkett departed for earth under guard in one of the next detachment of rockets. During the voyage the rocket's officers were careful to show Halkett consideration but no man of them spoke a word to him except when necessary. Feeling in the army against its first traitor was intense.

When Halkett reached earth after that strange voyage from Jupiter, the heads of the Council ordered an immediate court-martial. It took place in the great Army building. Halkett's trial occupied four days, and during those days the building was surrounded by crowds waiting to hear his fate.

Popular indignation at Halkett ran high, and many cries for his summary execution were being voiced. People contrasted the gallant struggles of Crane and the rest to hold South Jupiter for humanity with this treachery on the part of a trusted officer. Halkett might have been lynched if he had been less well guarded.

Inside the great building Halkett stood up and heard his conduct judged. The officers who heard the case gave him a fair trial. His counsel argued ably concerning Halkett's previous gallant record, the possibility of temporary aberrations and the like. Halkett might have escaped, but for his own testimony a little later.

"I was quite in command of all my faculties when I ordered the atom-batteries not to fire," he said quietly.

"Did you realize, Captain Halkett," asked the presiding officer crisply, "that in so doing you were betraying your sworn oath?"

In response to Halkett's statement that he had realized, the officer asked, "Then what reason can you give for your deliberate breach of trust?"

Halkett hesitated. "I can't give any reason that you'd understand," he said.

Then he burst out with sudden white passion, "Why shouldn't I have done it? After all, Jupiter belonged to the Jovians, didn't it? What were we there but invaders, interlopers? How could I order those hunted flipper-men destroyed when all they were trying to do was to keep their own world?"

His counsel made frantic signals to him but Halkett was beyond restraint. "What right have we Earth races on Mars or Jupiter either? What right had we to wipe out almost all the Martians as we did, and to repeat it now on Jupiter? Because their planet has resources, the Jovians have to be killed!"

That outburst removed any chance of Halkett's acquittal. The presiding officer read gravely the sentence of ten years in military prison.

"It is only consideration of your former record on Mars and South Jupiter and the fact that you were one of Drake's historic party," he stated, "that keeps this court from giving you a life-sentence or even the extreme penalty."

Halkett took the verdict without any show of emotion and was led back to his cell. Burnham, who had come in from Jupiter in time for the trial's end, went to see him before he was taken to the military prison. Halkett shook hands with him in silence. The two had nothing to say.

With Halkett in prison the world's wrath was appeased. His name was stricken off all the records of the Council's Army. Burnham went back to Jupiter. Halkett spent his days in the shops of the military prison, helping manufacture atom-blasts and bombs and other army supplies. He stood imprisonment quietly.

Crane had moved heaven and earth to get Halkett acquitted, but had found his influence useless. Burnham came back and told him how Halkett had taken the verdict. For a long time these two sat silent, perhaps thinking of three thrilled youngsters in technical school who had followed Gillen's flight, and rushed to join Drake.

Crane went grimly on with the business of subduing South Jupiter. In four earth years it was under earth control. It was gripped tightly by Crane's system of forts, most of its forests had been destroyed by atom blasts, and as towns grew slowly around the forts, great grain-planting projects were getting under way. There were some reservations of Jovians, but the greater part of the Jovians not slain during the subjugation were in North Jupiter. There the fern forests still stretched untouched from the equator to the northern pole. But now Crane was looking north toward them.

Jimmy Crane was now General James Crane, thirty-one years old and with gray showing at his temples from nine years of strenuous campaigning on Mars and Jupiter. He and the Council laid plans for the subjugation of North Jupiter. It was to be done peacefully if possible. The Jovians were to be offered great fern forest reservations and other inducements. But peacefully or not, the planet had to come under control. Crane, who knew the Jovians, began assembling forces on South Jupiter, even as he sent Burnham into North Jupiter to offer the Jovians the Government's terms.

Burnham failed absolutely, as Crane and almost everyone else had expected, to win the Jovians to peaceful settlement. The flipper-men had no faith at all in the earthmen's promises, and no desire to live on reservations. Crane flashed word of that to the Council, which authorized him to proceed by force. A great preparation began on earth and on South Jupiter.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the midst of his preparations Crane learned that Halkett had been released, his sentence halved for good behavior. He tried to locate him through agents but no one knew where Halkett had gone on leaving prison.

CHAPTER IV

The Renegade

ROCKET fleets arrived ceaselessly, pouring men and materials into South Jupiter from earth and Mars. The recruiting officers on earth were working night and day. Crane took the men they sent and mixed them with his veterans, drilled them, trained them in Jovian fighting, made disciplined armies of them. He concentrated men and materials at the equatorial posts.

For Crane was going to follow a different plan in North Jupiter. Instead of establishing a network of posts as on Mars and South Jupiter, he was going to encircle Jupiter with a thin band of earth forces and then push that band northward toward the pole. His circle, Crane saw, would grow smaller and stronger the farther north it pushed, and would drive the Jovians in North Jupiter onward until those not slain were hemmed in in the warm north polar region.

It took two years of preparation before Crane deemed his forces sufficient. Neither he nor Burnham had in that time heard anything of Halkett, nor had anyone else. Burnham thought that Halkett must be dead. But both had other things enough to think of when Crane began the long-planned campaign. With his forces encircling the equator of the planet, he ordered an advance. The band around the planet began to crawl north.

Fighting with the flipper-men began in days. The Jovians by that time knew better than to charge atom-blasts or expose themselves to the barrage of atom bombs. They tried a kind of guerilla fighting which was not ineffective in the dense fern forests. But Crane's forces simply blasted the forests out of the way as they advanced, and the Jovians had either to flee or be slain.

Crane moved his headquarters north behind his band of forces. He directed the band's northward movement by radio, sending reinforcements in rockets to whatever part was held back by resistance. Crane chose to advance slowly and avoid undue losses. There was no need for haste. The Jovians were being pushed ever northward by the contracting circle. Within a half-year earth heard that its forces had advanced half the distance between Jupiter's equator and northern pole.

Then came to earth surprising news of a check to Crane's advance. His band had been flung back with heavy losses by the Jovians at a half-dozen places around the planet! Incredibly, it had been done by Jovians armed with atom-blasts and atomic bombs! They had prepared a circle of rude trenches and earth-works at strategic locations around the planet and had inflicted terrible damage on Crane's band of men when it advanced to that circle!

Earth was aflame instantly with apprehensive excitement. Until then it had taken Crane's final success as certain. The Council had even granted future concessions to the North Jupiter territories. How had the primitive Jovians come to use the atom weapons? From Crane who had hastily halted the advance of his circle, came the answer. The Jovians were being led by a renegade earthman who for the past two years had been training them in the production and use of the atom-blasts and bombs. And this renegade was Mart Halkett!

Halkett had been recognized unmistakably by some of Crane's officers during the attack on the Jovian works, had been seen directing the Jovian defense. Halkett!

Halkett became immediately the supreme malefactor to the earth peoples. On earth and on Mars and on South Jupiter men flamed with rage at his name. A thousand deaths were advocated for Halkett if ever he were captured. Crane and Burnham and the rest of the Council Army's men appeared even greater in heroism against the black background of his renegade's treachery. A fierce desire to crush the Jovians and execute Halkett swept earthmen everywhere.

"You will enter into no negotiations whatever with the Jovians' renegade leader," flashed the Council to Crane. "Proceed with the North Jupiter campaign according to your own judgment."

Crane read the message. He and Burnham had been stunned by the news about Halkett, and Crane for a time would not believe it. "It can't be Halkett," he had said over and over. "I tell you, he wouldn't fight against the Council—against us."

"It's beyond doubt," Burnham told him. "Halkett was recognized by men who knew him well there with the Jovians. And you know what his views have always been on the Jovians."

"Yes, but to become a renegade against his own race! I tell you, Burn, Halkett could never have done that!"

Yet by the time the Council's message reached him, even Crane was convinced that Halkett was the renegade Jovian leader. He

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

called his officers. "We will begin the advance again tomorrow," he said grimly. "Radio all headquarters to make ready."

The advance started again, this time not calmly as before but in deadly earnest. The band of earth forces crawled forward until it met again the line of Jovian defenses. Crane had flung all his forces forward in that attack against Halkett's line, and the battle was terrific.

The Jovian atom-blasts and bombs, though comparatively few in number and inefficiently handled, did terrific execution among the advancing earthmen. Halkett's line held all around the planet though the Earthmen attacked like mad beings. Crane at last gave the order to withdraw. Earth was appalled by the casualty lists that were sent home. But though Crane was checked he was not stopped.

He let Halkett's Jovians alone until enough reinforcement had come in to make up his losses. Then he started the attack again. but this time not in a steady wave but in a series of punches. Great spearheads of men and atom weapons were thrust at Halkett's line in a dozen different places.

HALKETT fought fiercely to hold that line. His communications were poor, though it was known he had trained some of the Jovians in radio and was directing their fight all around the planet. He had no rocket and could not parry Crane's smashing thrusts by rushing reinforcements to the points attacked. He foresaw inevitable retreat and had the Jovians prepare other lines of defenses farther north toward the pole. The flipper-men followed him with absolute faith.

Soon Halkett was forced to withdraw the Jovians to the next of these hastily prepared defense lines. Crane made no attempt to pursue the Jovians but spread his forces again into a band and advanced northward, destroying forests and mopping up stray groups of Jovians. When his band reached Halkett's new line, Crane did not attack in force, but began his strategy of punching at the line.

The battle-lines on the Jupiter globes by which earth's people followed the struggle crept steadily northward toward the pole in the following year. Ever Halkett's Jovians were forced to retreat to new defenses and ever after them came Crane and Burnham and the hosts of the Council's army.

It was a strange situation—the three inseparable friends of boyhood and youth become men and fighting the war of races there on North Jupiter. No one could accuse Crane of letting his former friendship affect him, in the face of his grim determination.

And as Halkett's line, the defenses of the Jovians, reached the warm polar regions, Halkett's own military genius flamed. He commanded the Jovians in a way which, despite the meagerness of their atomic weapons, held Crane's forces to the slowest advance. The once-mild flipper-men fought like demons under his leadership. Crane, of all men, appreciated Halkett's supreme generalship in those grim days on North Jupiter. But he punched grimly on, and Halkett's circle line grew smaller and smaller as the Jovians retreated.

It was the retreat of a race, the weary hosts of the Jovians backing ever northward through the steamy fern forests that had been theirs for untold time, throwing up new dirtworks and digging new trenches always at Halkett's command, using every sort of ambush device Halkett could think of to hold back the earthmen. The fern forests resounded with the roar of atom-blasts and crash of atom-bombs, strange things flopping this way and that in the green depths to escape the battle, the Jovians all around the planet fighting bitterly for existence.

Reconnoitering rockets brought word to Crane that Halkett had established a refugee camp near the pole that held several millions of the Jovians and that he was collecting atom-blasts and bombs there and digging works around it. Crane sought to cut this base out of Halkett's circle, but Halkett saw the maneuver and occupied the place with most of his remaining forces. To do so he had to abandon his circle line of defense except for some smaller bases. So at last the circle of Halkett's line around North Jupiter was gone, and the Jovians held only those fortified bases.

Earth rejoiced as Crane went systematically about the work of reducing them. He sent Burnham with a force of earthmen large enough to hold Halkett and his Jovians inside the main base, while he reduced the smaller ones. There was bloody fighting before he took them. Those Jovians, miserably few in number, who survived in them, were sent to temporary prison-camps pending their removal to the reservations established. Then Crane came with all his forces and joined Burnham in front of the last Jovian base in which sat Halkett and his battered remaining Jovians, fighters and refugees.

Crane surprised Burnham and his officers by stating he would treat with Halkett for surrender, though the Council had ordered otherwise.

He sent in a messager summoning Halkett to surrender and avoid further bloodshed, promising the Jovians would be sent to reservations and pointing out the futility of resistance.

Halkett's reply was calm. "There will be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no surrender unless the Jovians are given their rights as natives and owners of this planet. Nothing the Jovians endure now can be worse than what they've already gone through."

Crane read the answer to Burnham, his bronzed, lined face set. "Halkett and the Jovians mean it," he said. "They'll resist to the last and we'll have to attack."

Burnham leaned toward him. "Crane, tell me," he said, "are you trying to save the Jovians in there or Halkett?"

Crane looked at him, heartsickness on his face. "Burn, it's not Halkett. Better for him if he died in an attack rather than to be taken back to earth and executed. But those Jovians—I'm tired of killing them."

Burnham nodded thoughtfully: "But what are you going to do? Order the attack tomorrow? The men are impatient to start it."

Crane thought, then surprised him. "Burn, you and I are going in to see Halkett and try to get him to take these terms. He won't come out, but we can go in safely enough."

"But the Council—" Burnham began. Crane waved him impatiently aside. "I'm conducting this campaign, not the Council. I say we're going in."

He sent a message through the works to Halkett, and Halkett replied that he would be glad to confer with General Crane and Colonel Burnham regarding terms, but anticipated no change of mind. Crane ordered all hostilities suspended and at sunset he and Burnham went with two Jovians and a white flag toward the Jovian defenses. The misty red sun was sinking behind the horizon, so distant from the huge planet, when they reached the Jovian works.

THE two flipper-men blindfolded them before taking them through the dirtworks and entrenchments, no doubt at Halkett's order, and took off the bandages when they were inside. Crane and Burnham saw before them the great enclosure that held the innumerable masses of the Jovian refugees. There was no shelter for most but at some sheds small portions of fruit and makeshift vegetable foods were being rationed out to some of them. The crowds of flipper-men, bulky strange figures in the dying light, looked mildly at Crane and Burnham as they were led through the great enclosure.

As they followed their guides Crane saw for himself the battered Jovian forces he had pushed north for so long, with their crudely made atom-blasts and bombs, many standing guard round the inner works. Here and there in the enclosure were large dumps of atomic bombs, protected by shelters. Near one of these was a small hut toward which the two Jovians led them.

Halkett and three Jovians came out of the hut as Crane and Burnham approached. Halkett and his own aides waited for them and the two earthmen went on toward them, with the slow laborious steps against the gravity-drag that were second nature to earthmen on Jupiter now. It was a strange meeting. The three had not met since they had parted on South Jupiter eight years before.

Halkett wore an old suit of the metal body-strengthening armor and had a bandage round his lower arm. His face was bronzed, and was lined and worn-looking, but his eyes were calm. He was a contrast to Crane and Burnham, trim in their metal body-protection with on it the insignia of the Council army that Halkett once had worn.

Halkett did not offer to shake hands with them, but waited. Crane's first words were confused and stiffly formal. He mentioned the terms.

"We can't accept them." Halkett told him calmly. "We've fought against them from the first, and these Jovians would rather die than go to your reservations."

"But what else can you do?" asked Crane. "You know as well as I do that I've enough forces to take this place, and that we'll do it if you don't give in."

"I know," said Halkett, "but the Jovians wouldn't do it if I told them to, and I'm not going to tell them. Besides, I've a way out for these Jovians."

"A way out?" Burnham said. "There's no way out with your works completely surrounded."

One of the Jovians beside Halkett said something to him in his odd bass voice. Halkett replied to him patiently, almost gently. Crane was watching him. Halkett turned back to him.

"Be reasonable, Halkett," Crane urged. "You can't save the Jovians and there'll be just that many more of them killed in the attack."

"Do a few more Jovians killed now make any difference?" Halkett asked. "After all those killed on South and North Jupiter?"

He looked beyond them, thoughtful. "I wonder if Gillen foresaw any of this that's happened on Mars and Jupiter when he made his flight? What would Gillen think, I wonder, if he came back and saw all this that he started?"

They were silent for a little while. The short Jovian day was over and with the sunset's fading, twilight was upon them. Callisto and Io were at the zenith and Ganymede was climbing eastward, the three moons shedding a pale light over the great enclosure. Dimly they disclosed the masses of dark flipper-forms about Crane and Burnham and Halkett.

Crane spoke with an effort, "Then that's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your last word on the terms, Halkett, why did you do it? Why did you become renegade to your own race, no matter what happened? Why have you made us hunt you north this way, fighting against you and with a duty to kill you?"

"I'm not sorry, Crane," said Halkett. "I've come to love these Jovians—so mild and child-like, so trustful to anyone friendly. It just seemed that somebody ought to stand up for them and give them at least a chance to fight. I don't care what you call me."

"Let's get a rocket and the three of us will head for somewhere else together!" cried the Jimmy Crane of ten years before. "Some other planet—we'll make out without Jupiter and earth and everyone on them! How did we three ever get into this, against each other, trying to kill each other?"

Halkett smiled, grasped Crane's hand then. "Jimmy!" he said. "You and Burn and I, back with Drake's expedition, three kids—you remember? But we can't change things now."

Jimmy Crane with an effort became General James Crane. "Good-by, Halkett," he said. "I'm sorry you can't accept the terms. Come on Burnham."

Burnham tried to speak; but Halkett only smiled and shook his hand.

He turned and went with Crane and the two Jovian guides, to the inner edge of the enclosure's defenses.

They saw Halkett standing with his three Jovian aides where they had left him. He was not looking after them. One of the Jovians was saying something and Crane and Burnham could see in the dim light Halkett's tanned, worn face as he turned to listen.

When Crane and Burnham got back to their own camp, Crane called his officers. "We'll not delay attack until tomorrow but will start in two hours," he said. "They'll not expect an attack so soon."

Halkett must have expected it, though, for when the earth-forces moved upon the Jovian works from all sides they were met by every atom-blast of the Jovians. Europa had climbed into the sky by then and Jupiter's four moons looked down on the terrific assault. Blasts roared deafeningly and the thundering detonation of atomic bombs followed each other ceaselessly as the hosts of Earthmen clambered into the Jovian works.

The Jovians beat back the attack. Crane then concentrated forces for a blow at the enclosure's west side. He sent his rockets overhead to add to his barrage of atom-bombs, and managed to make a breach in the western defenses. Halkett, though, flung all his Jovians to close these openings and Crane's forces were beaten back from it after terrible losses on both sides.

Dawn was breaking after the brief night as Crane ordered the third attack, one from all sides again with the heaviest forces on the western side. This time Halkett could not concentrate his forces to hold the western breach. The ground heaved with the roar of bombs and blasts as the earthmen struggled in with high-pitched yells and with hand blasts spitting.

They poured into the breach despite the mad resistance of the remaining Jovian fighters, while on the eastern side the earth hosts also were penetrating the Jovian works. Then, as Crane and Burnham watched from the camp outside, they saw with the rising of the sun, the sudden end.

The whole interior of the great circular Jovian enclosure went skyward in a terrific series of explosions that wiped out not only all of Halkett's Jovian followers and massed refugees but most of the Jovians and many of the earthmen fighting in the surrounding works. There was left only a huge crater.

"The dumps of atom-bombs there in the enclosure!" cried Burnham. "A blast must have reached them and set them off!"

Crane nodded, his face strange. "Yes, a blast and in Halkett's hand. He set them off to wipe out his Jovians rather than see them sent to the reservations."

"Good Lord!" Burnham cried. "That was Halkett's way out for the Jovians, then—old Halkett—"

Crane looked stonily at him. "Didn't you see that that was what he meant all the time to do? Give orders to round up those last Jovians in the works and bring them in.

"Then send this message back to earth: 'Last Jovian base taken and renegade Jovian leader Halkett dead. Jupiter under complete control. Accept my resignation from Council Army. Crane.'"

o

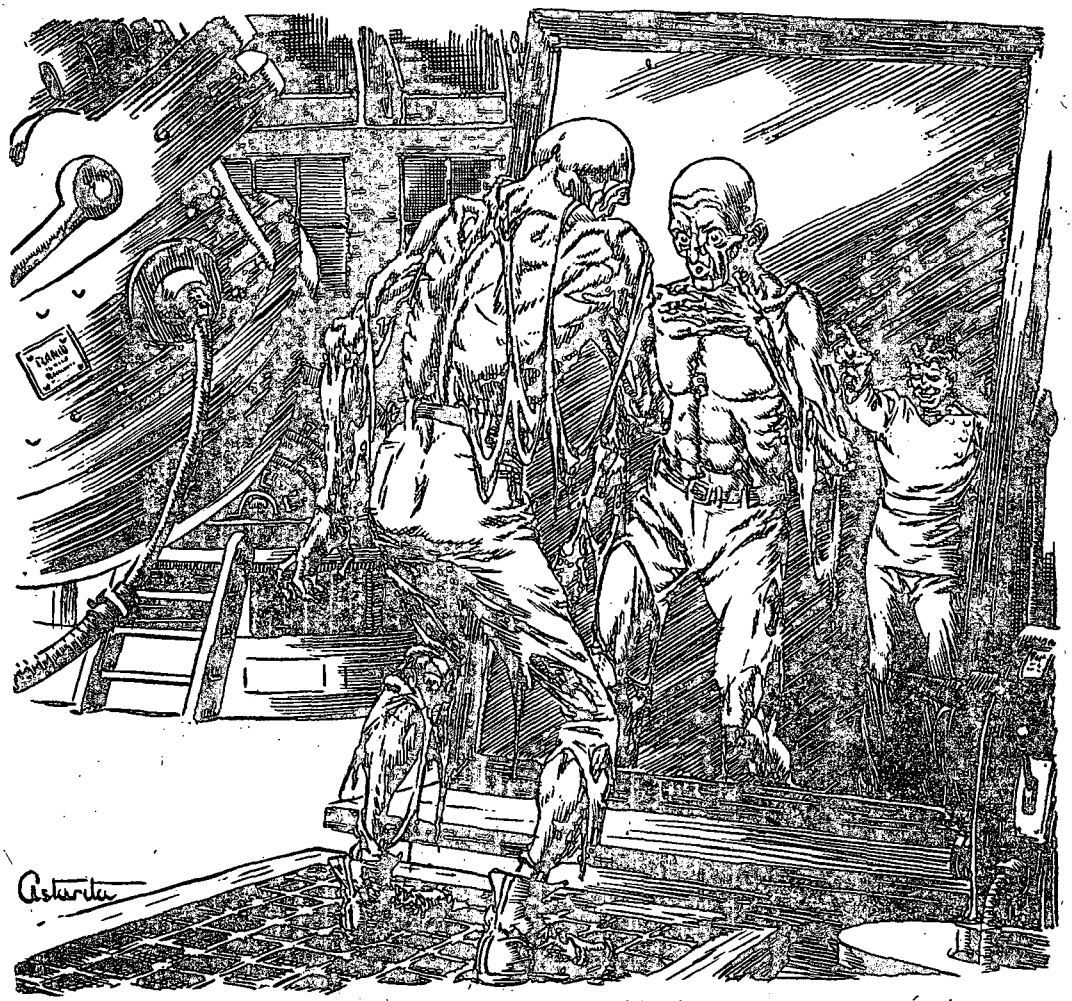
NEXT ISSUE'S HALL OF FAME CLASSIC

THE BRINK OF INFINITY

By

STANLEY G. WEINBAUM

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



As I emerged from the machine, I looked at myself in the mirror. I had become a grotesque monster—a baroque

Ultra Evolution

By POLTON CROSS

When the Earth's crust cools and the sun goes out, what will become of mankind? And—what will mankind become?

THE vision of an ambulance hurtling through the London streets in the early evening, blasting a path by the savage clanging of its bell, is enough to stir almost anybody from preoccupation, and to a reporter like me it is a positive clarion call. I was just coming out of the doorway of the "London Argus" when the white vehicle swept by, took the danger traffic lights at full speed and carried on up the main road.

One thing registered automatically in my mind—a story—and even as I thought of it I had my own car engine roaring, whipped away from the curb, and raced with a su-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

preme disregard for all law and order in the wake of the hurtling ambulance. As it was white I could follow it without difficulty under the high, swinging street lamps. I trailed it for four miles or so, out of the heart of the city to the lordly dignity of West Kensington. Finally the ambulance pulled up outside a residence in Kennedy's Crescent.

I jammed on my brakes, killed the ignition, then scrambled out of my car to join the ambulance men as they opened the rear of the vehicle and pulled forth a stretcher.

"What goes on?" I asked, and Tony, the ambulance driver whom I knew well, turned to me in surprise.

"You would be here," he commented drily. "What do you do, smell these things out?"

"Official secret," I told him.

"Well, I don't think there's much to interest you," he said, heaving his end of the stretcher into his hands. "It isn't a murder, and there's nothing lying around that even resembles a crime!"

I glanced back at the great shadowy house. For all the signs of life there were it might have been deserted for months. There was not even a glow behind the shades.

"Somebody phoned from here," Tony said, as I followed up the front path. "Said he was dying—all alone—and to pick him up at once. Chap by the name of Dale Cavendish."

I frowned, recalling something. We had found the front door open, and had stepped into the hall. It was here that it dawned on me where I'd heard the name before. Dale Cavendish! Of course! He had been scientific reporter on the "Daily Planet" about five years back.

No story? Well, I was beginning to feel interested, anyway.

I switched on the hall lights, and we three men glanced about us in mystification for a moment. There was nobody around. Then from somewhere down the corridor which led off the hall came a faint cry.

"Here . . . In here!"

Immediately we hurried along to a doorway through which high ceiling globes were casting a curious shadowless glow upon the room beyond.

"Gosh!" Tony ejaculated. "What do you make of it?"

HE SAID no more than this, since it was his job to attend to the man lying prone on the floor. He was not dead yet. He stirred flaccidly as the two ambulance men bent over him. I remained in the doorway, looking round a room which seemed to me to be an inchoate jumble of scientific apparatus, chiefly electromagnetic.

I'm not very much of a scientist, but I did recognize electromagnetic apparatus of a pretty advanced type, together with banks of insulators, complicated control boards, and in the midst of it all, seeming somehow like the central focus of the whole mass of junk, was an object like a gigantic enlarging camera depending from a girder athwart the ceiling, its narrowing end pointing towards the floor.

All this equipment sort of registered in my brain in a matter of seconds; my real attention was centered on the man on the floor, about whom the two ambulance men were now working. He was not very old, no more than thirty-three or four, and even if his face had not been contorted through the pain of some mysterious illness he'd developed he'd still have been mighty ugly. His nose was flat like a heavyweight's, and his lips thick and sensual. Only his forehead redeemed him. It was massive beyond the average with disordered dark hair, damp with the sweat of anguish, curling down it.

It was Dale Cavendish all right. I recognized that map the moment I saw it—a bit older but still the face of the bad tempered bloke who'd been the scientific reporter of the "Daily Planet," until he had quit to do scientific research.

"You'll—never get me to a hospital," he whispered to Tony as he kneeled beside him. "I telephoned and—and left the front door open just to—so's you could take that . . ."

He motioned weakly and closed his eyes for a moment. My gaze, and that of the ambulance men, moved to a machine rather like an outsized dictaphone standing on a bench. Like everything else in the place it was confoundedly complicated and possessed a multitude of wires leading back to the switchboards.

"It's—a—" Dale Cavendish opened fading gray eyes for a moment. "A—a thought-recorder. Everything's in it. Don't move it. Just—just—" He gulped for breath and twisted spasmodically. "Just press the red button and—and let the power run. It'll—explain—"

He was silent for a while, and then whispered a few further words.

"He—managed it after all. Cleverer than I'd thought . . ."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That definitely was the last statement Dale Cavendish made. Though the ambulance men rushed him to the hospital, he died on the way without further comments. So? Well, the police were informed and scientific apparatus not being in their line they asked Kensington Institute of Science to take a look round.

I don't know what they did or how they did it, but I do know that I was one of the reporters who heard the weird thought-recorder when it started explaining things. I'm hazy on the system it utilized, but the scientist who controlled it told us that thought vibrations had been imprisoned on sensitive vibration-reactive drums inside the thing, which in turn had been transformed into speech—or rather the words of the person who would have spoken had he been able. In a way it was like radio, only instead of electronic impulses being converted into sound, thought was converted instead, into easily understandable words.

That which follows is the story I noted down and which appeared condensed in the "Argus" because my editor didn't think the world in general was much interested in the doings of an obscure research scientist. My editor has no imagination, otherwise he'd have seen just how big an idea Dale Cavendish had really had.

See what you think. . . .

MY NAME is Robert Jesmond, and through the thought-recorder I am able to tell you the true facts leading up to the death, the murder if you like, of Dale Cavendish.

Cavendish and I first became acquainted through both of us happening to know Ellen Fielding. Though Ellen does not figure much in what I have to tell, I do think that she was the cause of all the trouble, albeit unconsciously. I met her first at a staff dance given by the Scientific Institute. My position was that of physicist, of the lower grade. I loved my work but it had a habit of worrying me. Still the pay was good and there was chance of promotion.

So when one of the boys in my department introduced me to Ellen I was irritated with myself to think that a red-haired, blue-eyed charmer of her type had been in the clerking department all the time and I'd never noticed!

"Bob Jesmond, eh?" she said, smiling and considering me under the bright lights as we sat together at the supper table after a pretty hectic evening. "I believe I've seen you now and again, come to think of it."

That was how it started off, and in an hour we were chatting as though we'd known each other all our lives. Then as we were leaving the building, I insisted on seeing her home, our walk amongst the merrymakers to my car on the parking ground was interrupted by a tall man in an overcoat and soft hat barring our path. I didn't know then who he was; all I did notice was that he was astonishingly ugly.

"Why, Dale, hello!" Ellen exclaimed, glancing up at him. "So you managed to get along and meet me after all?"

"I said I'd see you home if I could spare the time, didn't I?"

He had a quiet yet peculiarly hard voice, as though he were keeping himself in check.

"Apparently I've wasted my time," he added. "You seem to be well taken care of."

The gray eyes in the ugly face gleamed at me disapprovingly.

"Oh—er— Mr. Jesmond—Mr. Cavendish," Ellen introduced us. "Dale is a physicist, Bob, so you ought to have something in common."

"Bob?" Dale Cavendish repeated. "That sounds interesting. Been having a good time together?"

"Look here," I said quietly, "I don't particularly care who you are, Cavendish, but I don't like the way you behave! You—"

"Which of us is to see you home, Ellen?" he interrupted me.

"I—that is, we—" Ellen looked from one to the other of us helplessly. I even thought I saw her beseeching me to go away.

"Apparently," I said, looking at Cavendish, "it has been your privilege up to now, and I wouldn't dream of upsetting it. Thanks for a happy evening, Ellen." I smiled at her. "I'll make a point of seeing you at the institute tomorrow."

With that I left them to it, chiefly because there didn't seem to be anything else I could do; though I did wonder in a vague kind of way what a pretty girl like Ellen could see in an ugly devil like Dale Cavendish.

Next day I went out of my way to see her during the lunch hour and by degrees I got the facts out of her.

"I've known him quite a few months, Bob." She smiled a little self-consciously. "I met him when he used to be on the staff of the 'Daily Planet' as science reporter. I had a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

job in the same office before I came here. We've sort of, well, gone about together. The only trouble is he's so moody; always thinking about scientific things. Half the time he forgets to keep his appointments, and that's why I can never rely on him—like last night, for instance. It was quite a surprise to me when he turned up."

"Is there anything—serious in all this?" I asked.

She was silent; then she shrugged. "He's wealthy, Bob. That means something."

"He need be to offset a face like that," I said bluntly, unable to keep it back.

"I suppose he is a bit clumsy featured," she admitted. "But he seems kind enough—except for last night when he blew up. I like him well enough."

I considered her intently and finally she looked away and changed the subject. If I was to be good mannered I could not bring the matter up again, so I left it at that. But in private I made up my mind that I'd give Dale Cavendish a run for his money. I had taken a profound fancy to Ellen Fielding.

I was surprised, therefore, on returning to my apartment that evening to find Dale Cavendish awaiting me. The janitor had let him in and he was sprawled in an easy chair, smoking and glancing through a magazine. He got up the moment I entered and held out his hand. His big, ugly face was smiling.

"Hope you won't mind me barging in like this." I shook his hand and considered him dubiously. "I felt that I should apologize for last night. I didn't behave at all well. Just that I was a bit piqued. You know how it is sometimes."

I murmured something and asked him if he'd have a drink. He accepted. We got to smoking, and by the end of an hour's chat I was quite convinced that he really was contrite. When he left it was with the invitation for me to call upon him and take a look at his scientific apparatus some time; as a scientist myself I might be interested.

I was interested, because I had heard a good deal at odd times about his scientific attainments. It occurred to me that I might learn plenty from a man of his talents. So a week later I called upon him and he showed me round his private laboratory. It was the first of many calls on my part. In two months I was dropping in on him regularly, chiefly because I was by this time absorbed by some sort of theory he had on "timeless evolution."

"I see you don't grasp the idea, Bob," he said one evening, when we were in his laboratory. "To you evolution simply means progress through time, doesn't it?"

"Naturally. What else can it be?"

"That's normal evolution," he said. "There's another form of it—disorganization of energy."

I contemplated the electromagnetic apparatus about us—particularly a gigantic instrument like an enlarging camera with a downwardly turned lens. Dale Cavendish stood regarding me with a faint smile on his abysmally ugly face.

"As we progress through time the more energy becomes disorganized," he went on. "You know the commonly accepted fact that there was more order in the universe yesterday than there is today."

I nodded, and he spread his hands.

"Very well, then. If, instead of waiting for normal progress to disorganize the atoms of which we're composed we artificially disorganize them, they can be made to form into a pattern they would normally possess at a much later date."

"Presumably," I said, "the same effect as moving normally to the time when that pattern would exist?"

"Exactly!" He looked pleased. "That's the purpose of this apparatus here."

I STUDIED the apparatus for a moment or two and then looked back at him.

"But look here, Dale, how do you know what sort of pattern future atomic setups will have? How can you plan for a fixed pattern produced by a given amount of disorganization?"

"I've spent years on that problem," he answered, musing. "Atoms, Bob, move in charted paths as the stars do. It is possible, by studying atomic science to the last detail, to predict with mathematical certainty what sort of a pattern will be produced from a given quantity of disorganization.

"That is, up to a point. If one tries to work it out too far, the accumulated postulations get out of hand. But, at least, I know what vibration is needed to produce a pattern of, say, a man as he will appear five thousand years from now!"

His eyes were upon me—piggy little gray eyes that had nothing in common with the brilliant brain he possessed.

"And after that?" I asked quietly.

He shrugged. "I just don't know. There

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are limits to my calculations. Five thousand years' patterning is as far as I can get at the moment. It becomes conjecture after that, but obviously the patterns will form as they would have formed had normal evolution taken place. What comes after the man of five thousand years hence, I don't know. Not that I need to," he added, and even then I didn't notice that a sinister edge had crept into his voice.

"But what's the good of the idea?" I demanded. "What does it prove?"

"You're a scientist, and you ask me that! Isn't it obvious what a benefit it will be to scientific knowledge to know just how a thing will be at a time in the future? With this system we can positively know the appearance of anything from a lump of soil to a man. Science can then plan and chart accordingly. That is what I propose to do, and incidentally make myself famous as the greatest mathematical scientist of my age. . . . But there is a small personal matter to which I must attend first."

I waited. He turned and to my surprise locked the door of the laboratory, then without glancing at me he went to the switchboard and closed several knife-blade contacts. I heard a hum of power from somewhere and the vibratory apparatus for the shuffling of atomic setups came to life. I watched the glowing tubes and complex meters with their quivering needles; then I moved my eyes to find Dale was studying me pensively.

"You're not a bad looking chap, Bob, are you?" he asked pensively.

I grinned. "You don't expect me to answer truthfully, do you?"

"Compared to me, I mean." He brooded. "I'm as ugly as sin, and I know it. Ellen knows it too, but I think my other—er—attractions such as money, scientific fame, and so forth could have kept her interested in me—if you hadn't darned well got in the way!"

Suddenly his voice was hoarse, malignant. I stared at him in amazement. At that time I was, I suppose, pretty good looking—even handsome compared to Dale Cavendish—but naturally I had never taken it into account. It was only now, in this moment, that I saw how he really writhed at the thought of his own ugliness.

"I'm ugly, yes," he breathed, clenching his fist and still glaring at me, "but compared to a man of five thousand years hence I won't be! By present day standards a man that far ahead would be grotesque, a—a baroque!"

I glanced about me. Something ominous was coming. Jealousy had evidently gone to his head.

"Why do you think I've cultivated your friendship?" he demanded. "Why do you think I have so lightly passed over your constant association with Ellen? For only one reason, to study you, to study your electronic pattern on my instruments without your being aware of it.

"I know all about you, Bob—and you're going to be my guinea pig! If you become a baroque—as you will!—I know Ellen won't have you. I don't say she will have me instead, but at least I'll stand a better chance than I do now."

He broke off and nodded to an instrument rather like a radio beside the vibratory apparatus. "See that?" he snapped.

"Well?" I asked coldly.

"It's a thought recorder. Your thoughts and mine are picked up by it and electronic processes convert them back into actual words so that everything that happens can be repeated. Even as you hurtle forward in a disorganization-path you will still think, and I shall know what you are thinking, and be able to turn the history of your scientific change to my own advantage."

"The law will have something to say about that," I told him grimly. "Excluding the fact that I'm not quite the passive idiot you seem to imagine."

He closed a switch and grinned crookedly. I said nothing but I felt some subtle, deadly influence sap every scrap of strength out of my system.

"Energy has been absorbed from you," he said briefly. "That magnetic instrument behind you is doing it. I can be sure of you this way. As for the law, I have that taken care of, too. You fell into the range of my instruments by accident. No witnesses can prove you didn't; none can prove you did. A man can't be convicted on those grounds in British law. You're going ahead five thousand years, my friend," he whispered, approaching me, "and before my eyes I'll watch you change, and know of what you are thinking!

"Five thousand years in about ten minutes. Interesting, isn't it? The vibrations of this apparatus of mine, mathematically planned, will shuffle your atomic setup into the pattern you would possess if by some fluke you

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could live five thousand years and evolve normally."

I couldn't speak or move. I just stood and glared my helplessness; then suddenly he thrust out his hands and pushed me into the area of the thing like an enlarging camera lens. I landed flat on my back on metal plating, staring upwards at a glowing filigree of orange-tinted wires. They seemed to have a hypnotic effect upon me. I could feel my brain spinning in a gulf and the details of the laboratory became hazy.

PECULIARLY enough I did not lose consciousness. I was still aware of who I was, but not of where I was. The orange glow above faded out after a while, and I was in a blank grayness in which nothing moved. It was odorless, tasteless, formless, yet having a light that was neither sunshine nor daylight. Looking back on it I can only think that it must have been Time itself, so utterly jumbled and woven on itself that it made no sense. I was evolving, yes—if it could be called that. I was sternly conscious of the fact, but Time itself was a condition outside my development.

So, helpless in this blank gulf—for I could not rise from the metal plating, which, in fact, I could neither feel nor see—I lay staring at myself, along my body and then at my hands. With every passing second, if seconds they were, I was changing incredibly.

The shufflings and patternings which were going on electronically within me were more or less painless. There was instead a sense of tremendous inner movement, a feeling upon my skin as though the wings of butterflies were burring against it. I cannot describe it in any other way. But my limbs were narrowing in dimensions, my hands were losing their flesh and becoming like claws. Presently my clothes rotted and fell away from me. I knew why. Since they were included in the electronic disorganization for 5,000 years ahead they naturally could not exist then, but I could, because the normal event of death did not enter into the calculation.

Presently my head began to ache, and I could tell that it was swelling. My eyes seemed capable of penetrating the mist a little.

Suddenly the opacity was gone and the laboratory had come back. The orange lights were right above me. The sense of helplessness left me, and with a still aching head I staggered, naked, to my feet.

Dale Cavendish was contemplating me from the switchboard, a look of profound awe on his blunted features.

"It's incredible!" he breathed. "But it's marvelous! I knew I couldn't be wrong."

I passed my hands over myself, quickly. My body was far smaller than it had been. I was only about five feet high, balanced on pipestem legs and with the skinniest chest and hands imaginable. My head was the biggest thing about me, aching abominably and feeling terribly top heavy.

"Take a look at yourself," Cavendish ordered grimly, and he nodded to a full length mirror at the other end of the laboratory.

I stumbled to it and saw something with a mighty cranium, tiny socket-rimmed eyes, a buttonhole of a mouth. It was a distended, mad creature that moved when I moved. It was myself.

"Dale, you devil!" I swung round to him and then broke off, startled by the reediness of my voice.

"How do you feel, superman?" he asked drily. "Not that I need to ask you. Your thoughts were perfectly recorded and I know exactly what you experienced."

His voice goaded me, and I hurled myself at him, but with the merest flick of his arm he sent me sprawling into a corner.

"Just as I'd expected," he commented, brooding. "Your atomic setup has configurated to that of a man five thousand years hence; and your brain case has distended to allow for what, by normal evolution, would have been a superpowerful brain. Knowledge, however, is only gained through mental absorption in the normal course of time, therefore you have no more intelligence than you ever had despite the massive brain-case. The body has wasted at the expense of what would have been the mental—"

"How do you suppose you'll ever get away with this?" I shrieked at him, scrambling up again. "You daren't reveal anything to the authorities because they'll know I was your subject!"

"I have no intention of revealing anything about you, Bob. I'm using you as a guinea pig, so that later on I can state my conclusions with absolute certainty, knowing that when a subject is chosen I can't help but be right because you will have gone before." Cavendish paused, smiling cynically. "If only Ellen could see you now!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was sheer blind, exasperated fury that hurled me at him, but as he had said, he was superstrong compared to me. I was flung back and once more tumbled into the area of that devilish electronic machine. The paralysing effect began to work on me again, then Cavendish came forward and stood looking down at me.

"Obviously," he said, "I can't have you running around loose like this. That would be bad for me. And I'm also wondering what configurations lie beyond the five thousand year span. I can't compute them, but the apparatus will form the necessary patterns automatically. I think we ought to find out, don't you?

"You see, as I increasingly disorganize the pattern of your atoms you become further and further removed from normal standards. And, by the way, the process is irreversible. There must finally come a time, I presume, when the limit is reached and you become a zero quantity, with perfect thermodynamic equilibrium. Via the thought-recorder you can tell me what leads up to that state, can't you?"

Protest was useless, physical attack out of the question. He had the orange glow upon me again in a few seconds and once more the atomic shiftings overwhelmed me. The gray mist returned, and this time it seemed to last an interminable length of time. As on the previous occasion I did not lose consciousness, but became gradually aware of change stealing over me. The grotesque form was slowly but inevitably dissolving and becoming something else. I waited in a kind of horrified interest to discover what next I was to become.

I only began to receive the first clue when I noticed a change in my hands. They were altering into claws like those of a lobster! My legs too were extending into even thinner appendages, covered with fine hair. Extra legs were appearing from the region of the pelvis and at the same time my skin was giving place to a horny, shell-like substance.

How long it took for the metamorphosis to complete itself I have no conception. The one thing I did know was that I had lost the entity of man and had become a termite, of gigantic proportions. Cavendish must have been aware of what was happening from the thought-recorder, for when I merged back into the laboratory he was waiting for me with a gun leveled in his hand. Obviously my appearance gave him a shock; his expression showed it.

"I thought it might mean this, but I wasn't sure," he said, staring at me. "Amoeba, fish, ape, man, and then ant—to deal with the underworld life of earth as the surface cools. Yes, a biological necessity."

Naturally I could not speak. Human speech had gone, but not human emotions. Something of Bob Jesmond still lived within me. I realized that I now had stupendous power, iron-hard mandibles with which to tear my tormentor to pieces.

Suddenly I sprang. Cavendish's revolver exploded but the bullet ricocheted off my shell-like exterior. I snapped my mandibles within an inch of his legs, but he twisted free just in time and snatched at a bottle of acid. Before he could grasp it my pincer claws had knocked his hand down and he went colliding into the bench.

He staggered away, whirled up a chair and smashed it futilely across my back. I went for him again, and then I got something I had not expected. He switched on the nozzle of the electric welding equipment and dived at me. My shell plating was not strong enough for that and I screeched involuntarily as the searing flame bit deeply into me.

Backwards I went, until too late I saw I was once again within the area of that orange glow. Holding me at bay with the flame Cavendish slammed switches with his free hand and plunged me into yet another utter disorganization of atomic paths. By degrees the termite I had been was changing yet again, and with the change the hurt of my burned body subsided.

What other form could there be beyond that of the termite? I was interested in wondering, in spite of being the victim. As far as I could imagine, the termite was the last stage of evolution. But I was wrong. Quite wrong.

All signs of a termite body disappeared. The claws, the appendages, the stalked eyes, the antennae. Instead I began to shrink with terrific speed and changed into something which, in comparison with normal standards, must have been—and still is—microscopically small. I wondered for a moment if the ultimate man was destined to descend into the microcosm to escape the rigors of a dead world. Then I grasped at the simple but astounding truth.

I had become a bacterium, a rodlike flagellum to be exact, and therefore endowed with the power of movement.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dale Cavendish must have been aware of this also through the thought-recorder, but just the same he permitted me to come into the laboratory again. In fact I don't think he could help doing so, for I gathered that his apparatus only worked for a certain period, and then automatically stopped until a new pattern was set.

But this time I had Dale Cavendish where I wanted him!

AS I returned to the laboratory I was beyond his visual range. He was a Colossus staring blankly at the apparently empty plate of the instrument. To me, the laboratory was gigantic and out of focus. Whether or not he had switched off the thought-recorder I don't know because the power of hearing had ceased for me. I don't think that I could really see either but in truth sensed everything by vibratory waves, an accomplishment which is normal to a lowly earthworm, and even more so do a bacterium.

I moved through the air of the laboratory as an invisible speck, and Cavendish, struggling to discover where I might be, made no effort to leave the laboratory. This suited me, for I had the chance at last to strike back for the things he had done to me.

As I moved I realized why I had become a bacterium. In the last stages of earth's life, cold must grip it—a dead sun, a frozen world, all normal signs of life gone—except bacteria! Some forms of bacteria can survive and multiply in the ultimate cold of space, and the torrid heat of boiling waters. In a word, the toughest form of life, the last to die, and the hardest to kill.

And here was I—sentient, with the knowledge of a man, consumed by only one thing, the longing for vengeance. At will I could become a saprophyte and do inestimable good for Dale Cavendish's constitution; or I could become a parasite and destroy him little by little. The choice was mine.

It was at this point, some time after I had merged back into the laboratory, that I think he must have switched on the thought-recorder to gain some idea of what I was thinking, for a dull resonant booming filled the laboratory. At my tiny size and working by vibratory senses only, the sounds didn't have any meaning for me. Not that I was much troubled. No matter what Cavendish learned of my thoughts he couldn't see me, and that was the point.

As I moved through the air I saw his gigantic face filling all the void. First I beheld intense interest, presumably as he listened to the reactions I had experienced in changing from a termite into a motile bacterium; then gradually the look changed to one of deep fear as he realized I was somewhere in the laboratory, invisible, waiting for the chance to get at him.

Presently the booming noises ceased and he glanced anxiously about him.

I alighted gently on a crease of his laboratory smock and waited to see what he'd

"If You Go Up to Peak Seven Hundred—You Will Have to Leave Your Soul Behind You . . ."

VAN HORNUNG agreed to show Miller the way to peak, but warned him! "The attempt to achieve the summits may kill you—but if you live, you will not care about anything any more."

"I'll take a chance," said Miller. "Lead the way."

And so began the strangest of journeys, a journey in the dim twilight of the Arctic moon. Miller took two or three steps along the purple slope and then suddenly he found himself moving upward without effort. The mountain was sliding away below him. "The road's moving," Miller told himself. "I'm fixed to it somehow. My feet are like stone—like the substance of the road. . . ."

One with the sliding path he surrendered himself to that mounting glide Something stronger than himself held him in a grip that seemed purposeful. And he was being drawn nearer—nearer—to the most astonishing and awe-inspiring sight man ever beheld —in THE POWER AND THE GLORY, an amazing complete novel by Henry Kuttner in the December issue of our companion magazine THRILLING WONDER STORIES. Now on sale—15c at all stands!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

do next. He left the laboratory and went into the house. I was floating in the air near to him as he bathed himself thoroughly in disinfectant, presumably with the idea of making himself free from all taint of microbic dust.

It was amusing, and pretty futile! He had turned me into an invisible foe, and now he was desperately afraid of me. But at least he was scientist enough to know that I was beaten until he cut himself or sustained some slight scratch which would give me access to his bloodstream.

As it happened many days passed, and in this time he remained either in the house or in the laboratory, growing more and more confident as nothing happened to him. But from the thought-recorder he know that I was still hovering, waiting.

With everything being, to me, on such a vast scale I could not judge properly how he occupied his time in the laboratory, but it seemed that he was making endless notes on the villainous experiment he had carried out, and was evidently determined to cash in on the facts he had learned from me.

All this time he was careful to avoid causing himself injury, particularly when shaving, and I in the meantime had to sustain myself by consuming vegetable matter. Then one morning he made his mistake! In lifting a test-tube from its rack he caught it accidentally against the edge of the bench and the glass top splintered in his hand. Immediately blood welled.

His frantic efforts to disinfect the cut and swathe it rapidly in bandages were amusing to me. I hovered and still waited—for the blood to cease flowing. Then with my microscopic size I passed through the bandaging and torn flesh and became absorbed into his bloodstream. I became a parasite, a devouring, deadly parasite, breaking down healthy tissue at the fastest possible speed.

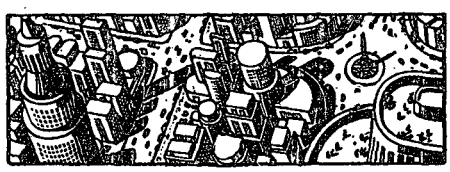
In an hour he knew he was doomed, though being within him I was not conscious of his actions. It was only when he began to cease moving that I emerged again from the selfsame cut by which I had entered. I found him lying on the floor with three men around him. I could not tell what they were saying but I was quite satisfied that Dale Cavendish was close to death.

I SUPPOSE the thought-recorder will reveal everything that has happened for I saw Cavendish motion towards it. What will happen to his invention I don't know, but possibly with all the facts laid bare by the thought-recorder it will be used by scientists with a less sadistic turn of mind for investigation into the mysteries of Time's future patternings.

As for me . . . These are my last thoughts to be imprinted and played back over that machine. I have left behind me the world of Man, Superman, and Termite, and because of it have become emancipated. I can travel space, and to the stars themselves. I can plumb the deepest oceans and pass through the hottest fires.

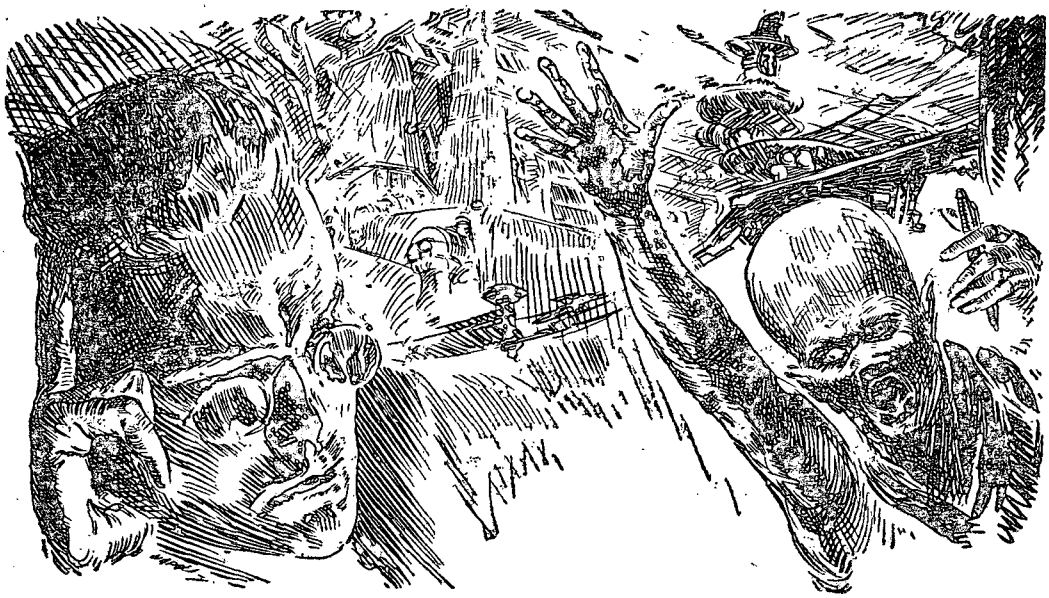
I can go where I will, an indestructible bacterium, invisible to the eye of man, a dispenser of justice if I desire, or equally a giver of benefits.

I am that rare thing—a bacterium with the intellect of a modern man. In a way that compensates me a little for my lost birthright because, being a bacterium, I no longer have the emotions of man. Ellen, my laboratory job, the human pursuit of happiness, all gone, unregretted. Dale Cavendish gave me one thing he never intended to give me —the key to the infinite.



Next Issue's Headliners: ONE OF THREE, a Novel of the Post-Atomic World by WESLEY LONG—THE BRINK OF INFINITY, a Hall of Fame Classic by STANLEY G. WEINBAUM—Plus Many Other Outstanding Stories and Features!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



GUARANTEED

By E. EVERETT EVANS

The Voice from the Future makes a protest!

JEAN COXART was something of a telepathist. Not a professional, but an exceptionally gifted amateur. So he knew that he had been receiving a telepathic call these past five days. But he was vaguely worried about it, and had not yet attempted an answer. He could not decipher just what was being said, although there was something slightly familiar about the word-ideas.

Finally, after several days, he caught on. It was not, as he had guessed at first, a foreign language. Rather, it was a very distorted form of English. There was a slurring—a clipped elision to the word and sentence structure, that had delayed his understanding. Now he had been forced to the belief that the person sending was from the Future.

Then came the day when he felt confident enough of his own ability to reply to the constant attempts to contact him. Instantly he was conscious of a renewed effort from his unknown communicator.

"What year are you living in?" the voiceless voice inquired anxiously.

"This is Nineteen Forty-eight. What year are you in?" Coxart replied.

"I am about one million years in your future. I am so very pleased that I have at last been able to contact someone from your generation. I have been trying to do so for years."

"What is it like in your day? It seems so incredibly distant from ours that it must be altogether different."

"Oh, I suppose it is. We have all the leisure we want, because everything is done for us by automatic machinery, and by robots. We spend our days with our studies, our hobbies, or in pure pleasures."

"That is indeed different. We have to work about forty hours a week in order to earn our living."

THE Voice of the Future seemed to chuckle, then continued:

"I have read of that. But it is because of our conditions here that I have tried to get in touch with someone from your age. There is a very important task which I wish you to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

do for me. Are you willing to attempt it?"

"That would depend upon the nature of the task, of course. If it is something that I can do, and that does not interfere with my ethical concepts, I will be very pleased to do anything I can for one of our descendants from the future. Just what is it you wish done?"

"I want you to bring a legal suit against a certain famous mercantile or manufacturing corporation of your day. I have in my possession one of their products. It has been an heirloom in our family ever since your time. There was a guarantee with the article, which has proven itself to be incorrect and thus they are criminally negligent."

"Well, one million years is quite a length of time, as you must admit, my friend."

"I grant you that. But their guarantee was made to cover all time, nor was there any limit to the length of time."

"Oh, I begin to guess what you mean. Your heirloom, then, is—"

"That is correct. My Foreversharp Pen, which was guaranteed 'not for years, not for life, but guaranteed forever.' It no longer works—I can't get it fixed here—and I wanna sue!"

THE ETHER VIBRATES

(Continued from page 10)

refreshing, but just the same there was something lacking that I can't quite place. Third place goes to Jacobi's "Lodana," which impressed me as being an average short story. Am reserving decision on "Up and Atom" as I haven't yet had time to read it, but have always liked Cummings in spite of what the mud slingers have to say about him.

The cover for this issue didn't work up much enthusiasm. It was well done, and quite accurate in a symbolic way. But, doggone it, I *like* Bergey's femmes with the cellophane space suits!

For goodness sakes, tell Tom Pace to go ahead and send in a picture of his girl friend so you can publish it in TEV! He has certainly dropped enough hints and if, as he claims, she is better than Bergey can turn out, it ought to be a real treat.

For outstanding service to humanity (to wit, burying Sgt. Saturn), I am hereby nominating you for the Nobel Peace Prize.—*Box 942, Newark, New Jersey.*

We accept the nomination—now send us the prize. Wonder what *was* lacking in LORD OF THE STORM. It seemed to us to have just about everything—maybe it had too much. We'll give Pace a green light for the girl friend on your behalf. But if the pic is any good we'll hold it for personal pinup purposes. Okay?

REWARD
by R. E. Ward

Dear Editor: For the first time in history I have sat down and finished a STARTLING in the same day I started it. What with all my other fanactivities, it takes a mighty fascinating magazine to make me do that. And the September SS was just that fascinating.

As for the stories this time, Hammond's was very good, of course. I keep fearing that with so much work popping from KH's typer he'll soon begin to turn out hack—but no, I guess he just isn't capable of writing anything bad. Virgil Finlay's illustrations, by the way, were undeniably perfect. He can give the proper atmosphere to any story, regardless of nature.

"The Circle of Zero" by Weinbaum was of course excellent, well up to Stanley's par. I really appreciate the service you are doing the newer fans by reprinting classics from the old days, which we will never be able to read any other way, unless we want to pay sky-high prices for the old mags, when—and if!—we find them. Keep up the good work, and by all means, reprint more of Weinbaum's work. The Finlay pic was very good also.

"Lodana" was a very interesting short. The illustration for it was all right, but not as good as Finlay could have done—but we don't want to overwork the master, do we?

Oh no—not another Tubby thing! I love Ray Cummings, I can't think of any story I like better than "The Girl in the Golden Atom"—but these Tubby things rub me the wrong way! I do not remember ever reading a letter commending a Tubby story. Why do you print them? Oh well, I still live for the day when Ray'll bat out a yarn like those he did in the old days. Until then, we'll have to put up with Tubby yarns every now and then. . . .

I could start another argument about the 20th anniversary of TWS, but it takes up too much space, and what good does it do? But at any rate, let's celebrate *something* in '49, shall we?

As to the letters this trip: Lester Cole—no, Rick Sneary is *not* kidding, and why doesn't everyone lay off him? All the other letters were very adult sounding, with the exception of a few, (no, I don't mean mine) and for this you are to be congratulated.

All in all, a hyper issue.—*428 Main Street, El Segundo, California.*

Well, those Tubby things do seem to have a way of turning up now and then . . . but maybe you'll get to like them!

As for 1949, we have an election year to worry about first, but we'll try to come up with something special, or spaetzl as the goulash hounds say.

OLD NASSAU—STREET
by David J. Reiner

Dear Editor: Just when things were looking darkest, and I was getting ready to hand STARTLING back to the repulsive Plutonians, a welcome improvement seems to have saved the day. Now, perhaps this change for the better is just a temporary lapse and further issues may reveal continuing traces of the earlier mediocrity which marked so many of the stories in recent months. I discount this grim possibility on the grounds that ye Ed is really doing his best to bring us a top-notch stf mag and that together with the tremendously rejuvenated TWS, STARTLING will be stimulating and exciting from now on.

What touched off this optimistic appraisal was the overall excellence of the September issue. There really wasn't a dead spot to be found. In fact, everything rates at least an approving nod; and in several instances vehement cries of "great!" are called for. Hitting on all 16-rockets, SS is rapidly forging to the forefront of mags-not-to-be-missed-under-any-circumstances. Which is a very welcome development.

And now to get down to cases.

The feature novel, LORD OF THE STORM, is right up there with many of the classics of yesteryear and today. Keith Hammond's clean, forceful style makes this story one long to be remembered. There's plenty of sound science, credible speculation on tomorrow's wonders and all blended in with a powerful conflict; enough to satisfy the most critical reader.

But my personal favorite was the H of F reprint. Once read, Stanley G. Weinbaum's THE CIRCLE OF

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ZERO remains to haunt you. Without dragging in 9 different kinds of ray-guns and without once mentioning how the fur-covered fishmen of Buskirk XXI plan to vanquish good old Terra, this gem of a story, peopled with warm, breathing characters, makes you wonder at the sheer artistry with which it is so warmly depicted. Like many of Dr. Keller's stories, Weinbaum's creations are timeless; a similar thread of basic human psychology runs through both. By all means give us the rest of SGW's published works. That is, those not previously reprinted.

LODANA. Acceptable. Glad to see Jacobi in SS.

And what is there to say about Ray Cummings' "Tubby" tale? After all these years, I've developed a kindly and tolerant attitude towards most of the series. UP AND ATOM certainly does no injustice to this intrepid lecture-hall adventurer. It may not be literature, but so what.

Virgil Finlay deserves an extra note of thanks for his terrific artwork. His ethereal style particularly lent itself to the H of F story.—*116 Nassau Street, New York 7, New York.*

We certainly hope SS suffers no immediate relapse. The quality of short stories coming in of late has been consistently high with both Ray Bradbury and Noel Loomis making numerous contributions of top quality, among many others. Thanks to our ability now to include novelets in the Hall of Fame, we have been able to lift the level of this recently somewhat bedraggled feature.

As for lead novels, this issue's Hannes Bok opus seemed to us to be among his abler efforts. Long's ONE OF THREE in March should prove provocative. And novels by Edmond Hamilton, Fredric Brown, Isaac Azimov and Murray Leinster are all in various stages of completion and promise mightily.

Unless an A-bomb falls on our manuscript files 1948 should be a good year for SS readers with that lineup. Other novels will probably be forthcoming from both Henry Kuttner and Manly Wade Wellman. So, if these gentlemen deliver as they can, SS should keep going right on upward.

OH; NO!
by Ben Kriegh

Dear, Dear Editor: What kind of goop is this language of Robyn le Roy? I can see no use to it whatsoever. If it did away with a few letters in the alphabet or made writing simpler, he might have something. As it is I don't see how anyone could have more than a headache out of it. It looks like a child's attempt to make a code or cryptogram. A betr wa is 2 nclud a fu nos. figs. or abrevs. And all this will put me in a class with Robyn if I keep it up.

Tell me something please! Why do so many people grab each other by the throats over a mere picture? Of course, the mag wouldn't be the same without pictures, but as long as a guy can draw something that pertains to the story and make it look realistic I wouldn't care who drew it. Sometimes Finlay is good, and sometimes he isn't.

Which is all beside the point—here I am writing a letter before I have read the stories. The ethergrams just got me excited too soon I guess. Here's why:

Now, like our friend Burgess
I'll submit to my urges
And dig in with McDaniel
To write my rare semi-annual
Poetic, rhyming Allen-like slovering
Hated so much by John Van Couvering.
(Don't blame you John.)
And to make its printing worthy
I'll do it about like Murphy.
As it was said by John (Hmm!) Walsh
"What have you done?" But—thash falsh—
Should be, "What haven't you done?"
Or something said by Ruby Anderson.
Then this fellow named Franklin Kirchoff
(See? His name is just like Kerkhof
And I've made an error trying to write it right.)
Oughta have a talk with one Roscoe Wright.
Right?
Oh, wrong.
Anyway, about Capt. K. E. Slater—
What I have to say will keep till later.
Then the letter by the venerable (?) Sneary—
Ah me, sometimes I get very weary.
Never fear, Miss (?) Randolph, I'll leave him alone—
But will Virginia Maglione?
Now there's a letter by little Lin Carter
That says the usual—just what it oughter.
That short little note by Junior J. Wasso
Was a little short of being colosso.
And the "voice that sells," Robyn le Roy
Did a masterpiece of work—for a little boy.
And a good old scout named Wilkie Conner
Put in a good word for Bergey—almost a goner.
Then—maybe some magic of John Bastow
Would help out the math of Pace and Cole.
And as for the epistle of Roscoe Rehm—
It's just like the others—it's just the same.
Also, I am happy that the soul named Clements
Has, unlike most others, no laments.
But that criticism by David Reiner
Could certainly have been a great deal finer.
And that Brown's Bothersome Blathering nulls
Sounds like Guerry's Gruesome Gibbering gulls.

Nuff said! Is everybody happy? Then I best leave 'em that way!—*218 Van Buren, Pueblo, Colorado.*

When face to face with such a screed
Your Editor, alas, is treed
For how can anyone reply
In kind to such weird panoply
Of rhyme that ain't and scan that don't.
Well, as for that, we simply won't.
On seeing Carter rhyme with oughter
We crave a bath in seltzer water
And as for Rehm and same, gadzooks!
Let's hang them out on well-aired hooks.
We've oft of our poetic hand bragged
Just now we feel that we've been sandbagged.
In fact our editorial we
Is flattened by a lad named Kriegh.

RAINBOW CAFE SOCIETY NOTE
by B. Lee Randolph

Dear Ed: What!!! Look at that cover! Bergey is wonderful! (in this issue, that is). Symbolic, no less. If it weren't for all the writing, I would frame it.

TEV was, as usual, fine. That's the first thing I always read. Surely enjoy your comments on scientific possibilities. You also are the only editor I know who gives such a long commentary on each letter. That makes you even more my favorite editor.

The best letter, of course was by Sneary. And Robyn leRoy comes next. The only thing that recommends him is that phonetic style.

Please find out for me if Wigodsky is *really* eleven. His vocabulary is a little far advanced for that age, don't you think?

The stories now can have their little rehashing job: (1) LODANA. . . . the best I've read, almost, since DARK WORLD.

(2) Believe it or not, this place goes to UP AND ATOM. Some don't like Tubby, but I enjoy a story like that once in a while.

(3) THE CIRCLE OF ZERO. "My theory is that sidewalks move instead of people." I would like to have had more about those memories of other times.

(4) LORD OF THE STORM. Defiled my expectations. Haven't seen anything that appealed to me less in a long time.

Now, before the red pencil comes into play, I will do what seems to be expected of fans, that is write a poem.

In my mountain glade, eerie
(I can't think of a rhyme but 'dearie)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I sit with my typewriter, Royal
And write to you a poem to boil.
You probably will, too.—*Rainbow Cafe, Buchanan Dam, Texas.*

With a gusty exhale beery
We've a rhyme of sorts for eerie
Not Royal, howe'er, our typer's thunder would
Have you know that it's an Underwood.

DOES WEINBAUM TELL LOVECRAFT?
by Paul F. Anderson

Dear Sir: Immediately upon snapping my nippers on the quarter-ounce September issue, I turned to the (CH3) 20 goes "Boiling!" (Or is it (C2H5) 20, or the many variants?) Upon reading therein the abysmal depth of your ignorance when you answer Johnny Van Couvering's fairly intelligent letter, which dares to mention the hallowed name of H. P. Lovecraft, several horrible monsters which I had called uppe from their essential saltes told me to remind you that your jaw stuck 'wayyy out . . . clear from N'Yawk City to little old Berwyn.

So both of you guys don't like HPL? So join a club. Tersely, this is the deal:

Lovecraft was not, could not be, a writer of science-fiction. Primarily, he was a poet, and a master of the art of fantasy, and he wrote most of his stories (exceptions being stories such as, "At the Mountains of Madness") for *FANTASY* magazines. When your above average magazine prints a science-fiction story to beat the "The Colour Out of Space," which appeared in September of 1927, I personally will plunk down my subscription for both TWS and SS. I might even eat the Necronomicon.

I gave John's letter an intelligence credit because he too finds cause for complaint in the May issue of what you so demurely call SF. I suppose ever since Heinlein went slick (to write fine stories as you know) he figures anything he writes is THE stuff. He sure fumbled the ball-point pen in that Columbus thing. Bobby missed all three—the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria—or hadn't you heard? Heinlein and Leinster for 15 cents? It could be far worse. And even Weinbaum!

That September issue was polished to a jewel-like luster, Colonel! But, wait a tick-tock or so . . . "Up and Atom?" K.P. for you, pal! That was certainly a wild pitch! Such kiddy-widdy junk belongs in the basket. Plunk!

The *Circle of Zero* rates one General. *The Ether Vibrates* is resplendent as a Colonel of some kind, and, likewise, *Lord of the Storm* in which Keith Hammond does a marvelous job of driving, driving, never-let-up mastery. Oh, baby! but that was a story to remember.

Even *Lodana* was well done, except for the rather stupid ending. Why can't the natives (why were they treated like slaves?) win sometime and konk a few of us whites for awhile? Together with the Encyclopedia Britannica Year Book, the September *Startling* is the book buy of the moment. In thinking again of the genius of Weinbaum I got out all my back copies of him and sat reminiscing.

I believe that Weinbaum talks with Lovecraft in the far and spacious dimension where all the greats go, whether it be science-fiction or fantasy. Both of them wished upon a star; both wrested tangible form and shape and purpose from the chaos of human imagination; both are immortal in print. Why?

Read (not in the magazine, which is beyond price) HPL's "The Haunter of the Dark" in his collected works, and then try to say that here was not a mind and a purpose which twisted down the strange corridors of man's unknown dread, not which balked at the thresholds of gibbering conclusions.

The biggest spaceman ever built, with all his armor gleaming in a force field of fifty gravities, and a blaster in each gnarled, space-blackened hand doesn't rate beans beside the Black Goat of the Wood with a thousand young . . . with BIG TEETH, man!—*702 Windsor Avenue, Berwyn, Illinois.*

We always thought it was big teeth, Grandma—or are we gibbering too? And man's "unknown dread," of which you so ghoulishly prate, has in general seemed to us to be derived of four-parts proddings of conscience to one part epsom salts or need of same.

As a river, the Mystic in Massachusetts is very lovely when not inundated in suburbiana. As a human, flee for the hills, pals, the dam has bursted! Be that as it may, we're glad you enjoyed the September issue. And thanks for the personal note at the conclusion of your excellent missive. Sorry we had to cut it at all but it was LONG . . . and we don't mean Wesley Long.

KITTEN ON THE KEY WORDS
by Marshall O. Donley Jr.

Dear Editor: This letter is based on three key-words —Average, Good, and Hopes. *Average* describes the stories in the September iss. The Best Story was Hammond's LORD OF THE STORM; above average for this author. Next best was the HOF story, but I don't think it was good enough to reprint. The shorts were nothing to speak about, so I won't. If you can't find good shorts, skip 'em and print a longer novel.

Average would also fit well to describe the cover. I don't think HNH (half naked humans) belong on SF covers but Bergey's girls are better than his men.

Good. This adjective defines the inside illos this issue. Best were Finlay's on pages 17, 71 and 13 respectively. Kiemle's on 80 was good but didn't compare favorably with V.F.'s. Worst was Page 87's Parkhurst. Letters by Wilkie Conner, Hugh Allen, Lester Cole and Roscoe Rehm also sneak in under this heading.

My *Hopes* are that you will sometime print more stories like CITY OF GLASS by Noel Loomis and IRON MEN also by Noel. Someday you *may* again print a classic like THE BLACK FLAME, S. G. Weinbaum's best. But don't worry, until then us fools will still buy your mag.—*313 W. Marion St., Lanc., Penna.*

Not much to say anent this epistle save that classics are not, alas, written on demand and that, as already mentioned, we have some good Loomis in the till.

HOUSE OF BURGESS
by Fred Ross Burgess

Dear Sir: Picked up the latest STARTLING STORIES today and was fairly pleasantly surprised. The cover was naturally the first thing to be noticed and it was one of the most surprising things I've seen in quite a while. Truly, even though my opinions of Oil Bergey change from cover to cover, this latest was *par excellant.* That means something in some language; figure it out for yourself.

Hammond novel as per usual. Surprisingly enough, it was really better than most of his. Incidentally, let all these fellows who will compare Keith to A. Merritt. In my humble opinion he far surpasses the so-called master. Merritt's stories are good if one reads only one per year. But recently I've been able to read three of his stories. And, though they were stretched over a period of almost six weeks, by the end of that sixth week I was so sick of Merritt that it was pathetic. Every one of Abe's stories follow in a set, *stale* pattern!

The traditional Merritt tale always starts out with some half-shot scientist; some handsome, well-built playboy-explorer; and a dame, who is always the sister of someone or another. Well, after roaming through strange regions, they arrive at some weird spot where all sorts of unnatural occurrences occur. Another dame, usually tagged Nuarra, or Sorphala, or Isis shows up and everybody falls in love with her and it goes on, getting fouled up every page, until you get so darn tired of it and of its uncountable, unmerited adjectives, that you want to. . . .

Well, most of Hammond's novels follow a fairly easy to define plot, but, strangely, there is *some* actions in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a KH tale. Boys, don't holler about HPL; he did vary once in a while. Save your breath to kick Abe Merritt, the boy from the old school.

Now, the mag itself. As per usual, there was a lead story and several short stories. And, oddly enow, the stories ranked in order of their appearance. *Lord of the Storm* was first; "The Circle of Zero" (Really a wonderful story; well worth reprinting) was second. Then, way back there were Jacobi's thing and the unmentionable (?) by Ray Cummings. Tubby indeed! Somebody ain't got all their marbles!

On so on into the most interesting section of the mag. What else but? That's right. The "Run to your nearest newsstand and ask for" *Ethereal Vibrations.* I shall do my best to answer evahbodys.

REWard: I was born in 3 B. C. I celebrate my twelfth anniversary waltz tomorrow.

Rick Sneary: Who cares about herion. Give me marijuana or opium any day. Yes, I did fall in love recently, so I would get along very gentlemanly in that spaceship.

Lin Carter: Neither: Opussess.

Captain K. F. Slater: Captain, I salute you.

Robyn LeRoy: Buddy, I used to live near the Atlantic Ocean. If you're ever up that way, *drop in!*

Robert K. Paris: Wistful wishing, old capital city of France.

Wilkie Conner: We all know you used to know Kuttner. Now stop braggin'. He's good. Didd youu readd whatt I saidd previouslyy?

Fred Ross BURGESS: Oh, things may go, and things may come,
But one thing we shall say,
Of all the poets in this book,
Burgess is here to stay.

Tom Pace: The author speaks. Quit bragging about your girl. I too have fallen in love. My girl is much better looking than either yours or Bergey's.

John Walsh: Awww, who cares?

Billie Lee Randolph: Please send photo. In return I'll tell you how wonderful I am. Robyn le Roy is neither male or female. He's a left-over fragment from some '36 Ford.

Lynn Stabley Cheney: Isn't it simply amazing how prolific that Kuttner boy is?

Franklin Kerkhof: I agree. Heinlein's thing was somewhat of a mistake. Incidentally, I can think of one mag which might try to get Einstein to write a fiction piece.

Hugh Allen: Pupperel indeed! No, the costumes aren't moving up and down. It's a sixth order curve; they're actually moving sideways.

John C. Bastow (sophisticated sorcery in the modern manner): Go back to your card tricks, junior.

Editor: The notorious non-com's life record may be easily obtained by sending me one of the models Bergey uses for his cover girls. For that you may have Sergeant Saturn himself.

Cranfan: I mean Greg Cranston: Luck to you, keed.

G. A. Smith: Could this by any chance be Glark Ashton Smeeth? Smeef, I mean.

B. De Revere: What could that "B." stand for? Bob, Bill, Brown, Bradley, Barbara, Bettina, Beatrice, Boots, Brumley, Bagley, Bottoms up, Bingo, Baseball, Basketball, Bergey?

Lester Cole:—YOU DARE DISAGREE WITH ME?

John Van Couvering: That's what I like; a nice sensible letter and a nice sensible reply.

Nebjinam M. Birmbaum: *We want the Sarge back.* Send me one of Bergey's models and I'll send you the sarge in person. If you'll send me Bergey, in an embalmed condition, I'll send the three forgotten ones.

Wallace Weber: Don't worry about good letters. Write like I do—perfect letters.

Michael Wigodsky:—

Guerry Campbell Brown: *****, **, ********** **! Get me?

David Renier: *Brother! Righto!* Who *Cares?*

Don Wilson: The editor of this mag, my boy, is obviously a well-learned fellow. You should read his rejection slips.

(Miss) Ruby A. Anderson: My dear earthquake, why the (Miss)?

Jack Clements: No one can stomach Idiot J. Marchioni's work, but did you by any chance notice this issue? But there's still one fault. From I. J. M. to Unthinkable L. Parkhurst.

Roscoe Rehm: There isn't. And for now, my dear people, that's all.—*115 Aycock, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.*

Three Merritts over six weeks . . .hmmmm. Even the late Thorne Smith can pall if read too unseldom. But if you, Brother Burgess, don't get a typewriter with in-line t's, your next opussess goes into the proverbial scrapbasket. You and your fallings in love! You're beginning to write in song cues.

STRAIGHT CRIT
by David J. Thomas

Dear Sir: I know you like brief letters and more of them since the Change, so I'll restrain myself to three main topics—

1. "Lord of the Storm." Hot stuff! The characters were amazingly three-dimensional for an SS novel, and the meteorological background highly interesting. An intelligent and well-written novel, as all of Hammond's seem to be. The Finlay interiors were also good.

2. The Merritt-Kuttner controversy. I'll go for Merritt in this wrangle; I don't think Kuttner's work is consistently good enough to rank with Abe's. True, "The Dark World" and possibly "Valley of the Flame" were on a par with most of the Merrittales, but yarns like "Way of the Gods" and "Lands of the Earthquake" aren't up there.

"Lands of the Earthquake" had a plot that was too intricate and unnecessarily implausible. Also, it lacked a powerful ending; contrast it with the terrific closing sentence in "The Dark World," which is on a level with Merritt's original ending to "Dwellers in the Mirage."

Dear Editor: I have been reading your magazine for some time and just now decided to tell you how I liked it. After seeing most of the letters you get from

3. The cover was fairly good, and if they were all like that I wouldn't mind. But Bergey's usual repellent females and menacing monsters are incredibly immature for a mag on the upgrade like SS. Get Finlay, preferably, or Belarski if you can't.

Oh, yes—"Circle of Zero" was terrific, especially the business about Termopolis. Weinbaum certainly had a feel for the fascination inherent in science-fiction; too bad so few of today's writers have.—*31 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

Few writers at any time have the "feel" you pine for, David. As for your stand on Merritt against Kuttner, why don't you and Burgess fight it out with syllabusses or something at any given number of paces—and we don't mean Tom Pace.

I HATE HEROES
by Corporal Rinehart S. Potts

readers I guess you appreciate a kindly word now and then, so here is one (or two).

As a whole, you have very good stories—but please, can't you eliminate the kind where the hero looks suspiciously like Frank Merriwell or Sherlock Holmes, with the exception that he uses a raygun instead of a pistol and a space ship instead of a horse?

Novels like "The Laws of Chance" and "Lord of the Storm" are the ones which make up for the above type. I guess "Lord of the Storm" appealed to me especially because I'm a weatherman! It's nice to know that some of the science fiction writers know weather. But they are few and far between.

I noticed your plea in the readers' column of the latest issue to have us put our addresses in the top corner, not the bottom. Well, I always try to please editors (never know what kind of a job I might look for after I get out) so—the address is up there.

Would you ask any readers interested in weather to write to me at this address? I'd like to discuss the possibilities of weather control, etc., with them. Especially those who are already trained in weather.—43010361 Squadron B, 67th AAFBU, Tinker Field, Oklahoma.

For Pete's sake, Corporal Potts, where we want addresses is at the *bottom* of the letter, not the top. We're tearing our tendrils.

Glad you liked our weather story. As a matter of fact Hammond gave it less weather

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than we originally intended when we suggested his writing a yarn on the topic. But it's bad enough talking about weather, we suppose, much less reading about it.

SHAKE, PODNER
by John Van Couvering

Dear Ed: I didn't know you were a lovecraft (no caps) hater. Shake, podnuh. I know I shouldn't speak ill of the dead, but I've got to get even with him somehow for stories like . . . fooey, can't remember 'em, my mind's set up a mental block to protect me.

LORD OF THE STORM was excellent. Mature writing, superb plot, and a lot of stuff tossed in that make one of the most realistic backgrounds in any story.

I don't know what it was about CIRCLE OF ZERO that got me, but it becomes increasingly evident that Weinbaum was one of stf's all-time greats. The theory of the Laws of Chance and Eternity combined struck me as being one of the most logical and intelligent I've ever read. Weinbaum could have made a name for himself as a philosopher *par excellence* in the Renaissance. Maybe all the philosophers were stfans and didn't know it. *Quien sabe?*

I like the way you use only a few shorts. It keeps them from sinking back into "just shorts" as when there are six or eight. The two this time were nothing spectacular, but at least they stood out. LODANA could have used more space in developing the plot to a point to where it didn't rush past you so fast that if you skipped a paragraph you lost the plot and your interest.

The Tubby thing . . . is Cummings TRYING to do it? I mean it looks like he can't get over the fact that there are scientists who have machines to take you into the atom. It would be a good base for a story if the guy didn't USE IT SO GOSH-BLASTED MUCH!—*902 North Downey Avenue, Downey, California.*

Let's just call ourselves the Hatecraft boys, what? Glad you like the September Thing for the most part. Confidentially, Cummings *is* trying. We infinitely prefer your *par excellence* to that *par excellant* or whatever it was somebody popped a couple of letters back. We thought there was something wrong with it at the time.

YIPE—HERE'S ANOTHER!
by Private James W. Evans

Dear Editor: Read the September issue of S.S. with varied emotions. It failed to compare with the preceding issue in many respects. I'll rate the stories first.

"Lord of the Storm" by Hammond was fairly readable and rather skillfully written. However, it failed to live up to advance notices. It seemed to me that our friend Hammond decided to turn out a yarn and went laboriously to work at it, determined that in the end he would have a story that would bring him in his monthly pittance. I cannot complain too vociferously of the result since I rather enjoyed it, but I'm very sure that Mr. Hammond could have done much, much better.

The "Lodana" thing was rather corny and very unworthy of your present standards. Let us cease these atavistic tendencies. That way lies ruin and broken dreams.

Have forgotten the name and substance of the other short. Also I have lost my copy of the issue. It seems somehow that the other story was good and I'm sorry that my nemonic powers are so untrustworthy.

I noted unhappily a couple of remarks by one Tom Pace anent my letter to TEV. . . . He refers to me in slurring tones as one who speaks in generalities and who has read altogether too little stf. According to him stf is very imaginative and seldom deviates from the path of greatness. I must demur.

I'm only too happy to admit that my reading in stf is certainly minute, as compared with that of friend Pace. I owe my sanity to that fact. Nevertheless, I've had only too many nauseating hours with this form of madness in the past two or three years, and if Mr. Pace thinks that the ordinary run of stf has the two above qualities, then he has read altogether too little besides stf. Yours truly is the last to run down what is good in your magazine, but he has nothing but contempt for that massive body of tripe that forms its backbone.

Everyone else does it, so here I go:

Once upon a weekend beery,
I, in search of coffee bent,
Left at noon my couch and bleary-
Eyed stopped short in wonderment.

The sun shone brightly on the road
Where frisked (had I drunk Xeno, too?)
A thing whose outlines plainly showed
That 'twas a cow. Of purple hue.

What madness this? D. T.'s perhaps.
Thus ran inebriate my thoughts.
I steeled myself lest mind collapse
In worlds with violet bovines fraught.

I peeked again in shuddering fright
And prayed that it had disappeared.
Not so, a purple cow, all right,
Was this BEM which at me leered.

A BEM? Yes, it could be!
Some non-terrestrial monstrosity,
A creature from Uranus, mayhap from some Venusian bog,
Or yet a Plutonian refugee.

If stf and BEM's fantastic
With reason could explain such drastic
Visions in terms both logical and common to us fans,
Then owed I thanks most orgiastic.

With sanity restored and sure
I gazed anew and felt how pure
The scientifiction urge to ponder:
If I could but this cow immure!

Somehow she sensed my evil plot,
For high into the blue she shot
And sparks behind her trailed like comet tails.
Of evidence there was not one jot.

Since then no drink dost touch my lips,
Long severed are all dear friendships,
I walk alone in silent, musing meditation:
"A purple cow? Oh sure, and interstellar trips!"—*18319292 Company G—STR., Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.*

We dip our arrows in curare, in bine and inee too
In cobra juice and mandrake root, sulfuric acid, phew!
To lips firm pressed, determined, set, we put our long blow pipe
Take careful aim and blast this wielder of the "massive tripe."

'Tis true our hacks may hunt in packs, our paragraphers score
With cliche stacked on cliche from Rigel to old Sol's core
But never in all history, despite their basest urges
Have they used that threadbare purple cow by Gelette (not Fred Ross) Burgess.

LIGHT YEARS BEHIND
by John Welsh

Dear Editor: Hammond's "Lord of the Storm" really wasn't half bad; a bit better than half good, for that matter. The Cromwellian idea didn't strike me as being too original and there was a novel in another mag recently which concerned a boy being robbed of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his leadership by birthright but the writing was the smooth stuff that you come to expect from Hammond, and I thought the characters *very* good. I happen to have that hideous habit of peeking at endings, and so lost some of the punch of this yarn, but that didn't detract from the overall effect. BUT it's still light-years behind *Call Him Demon* and *Valley of the Flame*.

Finlay's pix were quite good; far from his standard, however. Can't you demand his best, i.e. *The Man-less Worlds*, instead of the escutcheon-blotting work he's grinding out nowadays?

I've yet to read a tale by Stanley Weinbaum that I didn't enjoy thoroughly. *The Circle of Zero* upheld that stratospheric par magnificently. It was truly a gem of scientific thought. By the traditional way, are there any of those delightful van Manderpootz yarns left to be printed? Who could forget Dixon Wells, always late, and the hilariously egotistical van Manderpootz? Not I, certainly.

Carl Jacobi's *Lodana* didn't disappoint me, as I have never cared overmuch for his writings. This one was neither outstandingly good nor o.p. and Kiemle's pic was ditto.

If all the words ever written condemning Ray Cummings were stacked up, I venture to say that it would take the little bird more than one second of eternity to wear them to nothing. My opinion? STARTLING'S never printed anything worse!

And that title! Aaiieeee!

How about a novel from Hudson Hastings? *Noon*, in the Aug. TWS, was marvelous. And Binder! By all means. Another *Impossible World* or *Five Steps to Tomorrow* would be an incomparable treat, if Otto still has the knack for scope that made him famous.

Oh, my, I forgot the cover—and it really should be unforgettable. One of your best covers ever. Let's hope that a new policy is in force. Ia, ia, Shub-Bergey!—*154 North Main Street, St. Albans, Vermont.*

So it's light years behind, is it? A parasang to you, John, for that one. We're looking up the van Manderpootz matter. If possible, we'll manage to turn up one or two of them in a future H of F. Also are taking the Hudson Hastings novel matter under advisement. If Binder can write another, we'll buy it.

LITTLE GRAY ROSE IN THE WEST
by William E. Rose

The sergeant's vacated and vanished, he's demoted, degraded and floored,
Instead of Dear Sarge or Old Saturn, it's "Dear Editor" now that is scored.
His ego was shattered and blasted, the stripes from his sleeves they were torn,
His language is streamlined and gentle, his poems are sweet and forlorn.
No more does he roam through the valleys, with moon-calves and grulzaks and bems,
Or skip through the jovian meadows, with slews of etheral "fems".
His thirst it is slakened forever, at least it appears to be so,
As he cheerfully plays second fiddle, to morons like Kennedy's Joe.
At his desk he too faithfully copies, the droolings of sad Alan Jones,
Whose words are as pointless and witless, as a dying imbecile's groans.
Or he passively okays the patter, of Murphy, McDaniel and Rick,
And the regurgitations of Robyn, quite enough to make anyone sick.
With a mournful salute to ex-sergeant, this message I presently close,
Addressed to "Dear Sir" and the "Ed", I remain most respectfully—Rose.—*P. O. Box 430, Beaumont, Texas.*

In a Xeno-soaked urn 'cross the spaceways, the ashes of Saturn repose
Quite grey save for one spot of scarlet, which is all that is left of his nose.
Around him in three little urnlets, to fill a sub-etheric booth
Are the incinerations of Frog-eyes, of Wart-ears and old Snaggletooth.
Their bright mausoleum's avoided by all who would traffic the stars
In flavor-sealed vacuum space-ships or atomic plutonium cars
Each hour on the hour a loudspeaker lets go with a horrible roar
With words of portent so horrendous it chills spacefarers through to the core.
"Oh frozen excrescence of Pluto!" or "Mercury's volatile air!"
Or "Zounds by spacehounds" or "Hey pee-lot!" or "Sweet pickle juice from Altair"
Are samples sufficiently gruesome to explain why the Sarge is marooned
And is doomed to remain so forever, at least till his language is pruned.
No nova nor hell-fire nor comet caused Saturn to shrivel and hiss
'Twas truly the prod of his conscience at turning out drivel like this.

Next please! *Please!!* PLEASE!!

REJOICE?
by Dan Mulcahy

Dear Sarge: (Even if you have abandoned space lingo, Xeno, etc., it surely can do no harm to address you by this time-honored title.)

Looking over TEV for the last year, I see Texans, Californians, Canadians and so on in abundance, but not a single inhabitant of the good ol' "Show-me State" can I find. It is the purpose of this epistle to remedy that sad situation, and to inform you that you *do* have fans here, though they are few and far between, so—

"Rejoice, ye fen, raise up a cheer,
The Spirit of St. Louis is here!"

Having thus modestly informed SS's readers of my debut into stfandom, I shall proceed without further delay to the criticism of the September issue of SS. First, the cover: I almost missed SS on account of this unprecedented cover design. I had to look twice before I realized what mag I was looking at. Gad! Not a gal, guy, and/or BEM in sight! SYMBOLICAL, yet! Okay, I suppose, but *please* Earle, we loved you as you were.

In the story dept., we have—

1st) Lord of the Storm. The less said about this one the better. I gave up after plowing through forty hopelessly dull pages. Here's hoping Leinster's story will be better.

2nd) The Circle of Zero. Oh, joy! At last we have a HofF-er that is really a classic. This great Weinbaum story more than made up for that miserable flop of a lead novel. Finlay's illustration was good, too, even though his figures are *very* human, while Stanley explicitly states they were "not at all human". Oh well, you can't have everything. Let's have more, *many* more Weinbaum classics.

3rd) Up and Atom. Though the plot was antiquated, the writing no masterpiece, and I am prejudiced against "Tubby" stories, I found this one much better than usual.

4th) Lodana. Haven't read this one yet, but I'm looking forward to it. Well, that takes care of the stories. The illustrations were swell, too.

By the way, Ed, old thing, have you read the Post Scripts section of the July 19 issue of the Saturday Evening Post? It contains an amusing feature by a renegade fan named Jaffray, called "Stupefying Stories * * 'Death in the Fission Chamber' ". If you haven't, you ought to; gives an idea of how hackneyed plots look to an outsider.

And now for some comments anent TEV. 1st, though this will probably spell doom, I want it clearly under-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stood that I LIKE LOVECRAFT, and think any fan who thinks otherwise should be condemned to read all the Shaver Mystery Stories written. (On second thought, that's a bit harsh. Give 'em an alternative of being drawn and quartered instead.)

2nd) Comments about Bob H.'s story, "Columbus was a dope" seem to be divided into the following camps:

a. It was wonderful!

b. It was awful!

I belong to the latter class. If submitted by a less well known writer it would never have been accepted. So much for that.

The Ed's replies to the current crop of letters seems to be confined to correcting grammar and spelling errors in same. So now it's *Professor* Saturn, eh?

I shall end with a plea that LeRoy drop his phonetic spelling. I spend hours on end trying to decipher Robyn's Ravings.—*4170 Utah Street, St. Louis, Missouri.*

Rejoice, eh? Well, we have a remedy for you right at hand, huh, to wit—

ROBYN BREAD REST
by Robyn leRoy

Der Ser: If Msr. Cranston wud stude the subjekt a litl, he wud realyz that an onest atempt tu simplify "English" wud ental develupment uv sum 42 fonetik *simbolz, and a smart simplifyer wud* be tu boyl doun evre werd tu thre letrz and thro haf uv them awa. Tharfor, Y'm not gilte, az charjd!

Trule apresheated Burgess' letr. Kawzd me tu re-red preveus fen-misivz, and thus kach mane poynts un-noted ferst tym.

Duzn't J. Van C. rekugnyz dyakritiks? (Even if not by Webstr)

Billie iz femal. Robyn iz mal. Iz that enkerajing?

Atenshun fen! Nou we no hwar Bergey gets hiz ydeuz! Editor kawlz me a BEM, then asks about my red weskut. A BEM in a red weskut yet!!

Sore, Ed, myn's prezentle in the klenerz.

Anent storez:

Lykt Hamilton's, "Lord . . . .", but think kud hav found les tyrd ending.

Weinbaum az expekted—klasik!!

Lodana: Ho, Hum. (menz sam thing, even in foneetiks.)

Plez, Mr. Editor, get Cummings iretrevable lost & send Tubby tu fynd him.

Ad my vot for a store by Merritt, illustrated by Finlay, The Magnifisent!

Mrs. La Savio, Y hav 2-bit edishunz uv kopez U kuvet, (sumhwat baterd).

Enjoyd editoreal koment. Remyndz uv Rushan'z niu erth-boring mashen.

Just envizhun ferther develupment. Prezents grat posibilitez.

This sekund paj iz just for syn-awf.

Until next tym. . . .—477 West South Street, Galesburg, Illinois.

Will that hold you, Mulcahy? It's got us too, darn it!

TEXAS LEAGUER
by Michael Wigodsky

Dear Sir: First of all, I would like to say that, despite rare mistakes like THE KINGDOM OF THE BLIND last issue, your novels are definitely on the upgrade.

As evidence of this, I point to LORD OF THE STORM, by Keith Hammond. This story, of a type unusual for Hammond, in its politico-social aspects, reminded me a lot of H. G. Wells. Not that Hammond's style was ever derivative. In fact, it was so original it was hard to believe Hammond had written it. The idea of the thinking-machine, while not original, was handled so strangely that it came as a distinct shock. The Mission scene was very funny. And, last but certainly not least, in La Boucherie, Hammond has come up with a character that even Dickens never equaled.

The Finlays were fine, though not an example of The Master's best work. Bergey, for once, did a fine cover.

THE CIRCLE OF ZERO was your only example so far this year of a Hall of Fame Classic worth reprinting. I only wish it had been longer, to permit the development of such intriguing glimpses as Termopolis. Why not have Kuttner or Hammond do a novel called TERMOPOLIS, CITY OF THE END?

The Finlay for C of Z was really wonderful.

LODANA was Jacobi, the Great—'nuff said.

Kiemle was pretty good.

And then you had to spoil this lovely issue with a Tubby. And illustrated by Parkhurst, yet. This is adding insult to injury.

SFFP was alright.

Reward: Some day a fan will say, "So be it. But I still look back with nostalgia on the good ol' scientifantasy days of 1946-7-8."

Sneary: Yoor eempahsebul.

Carter: We agree.

McDaniel: Exactly! Who says Merrit's better?

Wasso: If you don't *say* something in your next letter, I'll "contact" you!

Slater: Cold, cold, space.

le Roy: U stenk, *the* voyz that selz!

Paris: Space Opera! Foo!

Connor: Kuttner *is* (I agree with you) THE GREATEST S-F WRITER OF ALL TIME.

Burgess: My name is Leahcim Yksdogiw. I am only owt days old. I have been reading this magazine for ytriht years, and I think Fred Ross Burgess is ysuol.

Maglione: Tender age!

Murphy: Kuttner is better that Merrit.

You'll have to grin and bear it.
SHIP OF ISHTAR is no fake,
But not as good as LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE.

Pace: For your information, I am now twelve.

Walsh: We want more Heinlein. A great deal more Heinlein. Slicks are getting too much of his work.

Randolph: le Roy certainly is an *it!*

Cheney: You're too general.

Kerkhoff: as to wheter or not Kuttner is sf, who cares?

Allen: Nostalgia.

Bastow: Still smells.

Cranston: "Ambitious City." *Whom* is he quoting?

Smith: The illiteracy rate among fans is 76.9%.

De Revere: (eh?)

Cole: equation?

Van Couvering: "The Voice That Smells!" Heh! Heh! Heh!

Wright: *I* hope!

Barker: Captain Future stinks.

Birnbaum and Weber: Tadpoles is right.

Wigodsky: Mah ideel.

Brown: Brown's Bottled Bang!

Reiner: Raucous razzing!

Wilson: The announcer, Don Wilson?

Anderson: Highbrow?

Clements: As for George O. Smith, you can have him!

Rehm: THERE IS NO ADEQUATE DEFENSE, EXCEPT STUPIDITY, AGAINST THE IMPACT OF KUTTNER.

Well, thanks. LORD OF THE STORM shares with LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE the distinction of being the best story I have read in your magazine. CIRCLE OF ZERO is the best Hall of Fame I have read, except Clark (The Wonderful) Ashton Smith's DIMENSION OF CHANCE. LODANA is good. The artwork is above average.—*306 Evans Avenue, San Antonio, Texas.*

On the whole a sympathetic letter. We heartily agree about Heinlein, alas. But who's to blame? But, Michael, do you have to write like a reverse-lapeled mutant? This is Professor Editor speaking.

FENSTUFF
by Jack Clements

Dear Ed: So you finally went ahead and did it, eh? Or Bergey did, anyway. I'm referring of course to the elimination of the cover girl. The cover, I might add, was very good, one of Bergey's best efforts. That's what we want, simple covers. And thanks for keeping the printing down to a minimum.

Interior illustrations all above average this time.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Finlay was fine on the full pager for the novel, excellent on the small ones. Parkhurst and Kiemle both good. AND NO MARCHIONI. WHEEEEEE!

The Hammond novel was great, one of the best things Kuttner has done, and Padgett has a right to be proud of it.

The Weinbaum story was hyper, well worth reprinting. Too bad there aren't more of his stories left. I still think de la Ree had a terrific idea, though it was a bit impractical, at least considering the present paper situation.

Remaining shorts were both very good and very bad. I'll let you guess which ones were which.

TEV was better this month than it has been for a long time. Of the fact that I had a letter in has no connection, but . . . heh heh. In fact, I'm inclined to think that this was the best TEV yet. In spite of Burgess. Even Wigodsky (who I DO believe is only eleven) didn't rate the illo's.

One fellow brought up a point which I've thought of several times. but you inadequately explained it. I mean the comment about TWS and SS seldom appearing in an anthology.

You blamed rival publications having control over them. While that is partially true, I don't think it clears the matter up. Firstly, anthologies are consisted mainly of short stories, which used to be (I use the past tense, mind you) your two mags weak points. Also, most anthologies have been fantasies. Still pursuing the matter further, an anthology selection is not necessarily the best available.

Too often a fellow that knows nothing about stfantasy sets out to make a collection. I've seen some frightful ones in this line. However, there were two excellent stfanthologies published recently, and TWS and SS were not present in either one. (I don't think). Finally, I believe (correct me if I'm wrong) that Charteris collected a group of stories from TWS ALONE. And if ever another collection is made, if it is of any merit at all, it will be loaded down with your stuff of recent vintage. You've really improved.

I see the clamor for old stf in favor of new is going strong, so allow me to get my two cents worth in. When I first started reading stf, I noticed that about a year after I became initiated, I didn't get the kick out of it that I used to. So I immediately came to the conclusion it was deteriorating. But upon receiving numerous back issues, I found that I liked them, as a rule, less than the present day stuff.

Of course there were great yarns then, but when did Startling ever have a year like '47. Stories like "The Dark World", "Laws of Chance", "Lands of the Earthquake" and the unforgettable "Kingdom of the Blind" did not run as close together then as they do now. If "Lord of the Storm" had been published ten years ago, it would be on our classics list today.

I for one say that the output of classics is greater today. While I'm at it, look how juvenile the E. E. Smith's works appear today. Personally, I don't care one way or the other when a story was written. If I enjoy it, that's enough.

The other squabble is over the Kuttner "fantasies". The only claim they have against them is "they don't belong in SS". And still most of them admit they are excellent. I wonder if anyone ever stopped to notice the way Kuttner explains almost all the fantasy by calling them unfathomable sciences. The odd happenings in his stories are supposed to be scientific incidents, beyond our scope. If that isn't stf, I don't know what is.

With a thank you for next issue's novel, which I know is going to be great already, I sign off.—*6310 Madison Rd., Cincinnati 27, Ohio.*

A heck of a good letter, Jack. Let's see where we can help you out. Incidentally your opinion on the recent development of stf in magazines like this is very close to our own. Sometime, if you ever get East, we can furnish you with a number of off-the-record cases of former "greats" who have attempted recent comebacks in the light of the current stf vogue.

Almost without exception they have failed miserably—and this despite all the help and encouragement we could furnish them—for they are great guys as well as great names. Stf has gone further than almost anyone

[*Turn page*]

To People who want to write but can't get started

Do you have that constant urge to write but the fear that a beginner hasn't a chance? Then listen to what the former editor of Liberty said on this subject:

"There is more room for newcomers in the writing field today than ever before. Some of the greatest of writing men and women have passed from the scene in recent years. Who will take their places? Who will be the new Robert W. Chambers, Edgar Wallace, Rudyard Kipling? Fame, riches and the happiness of achievement await the new men and women of power."

HAD NEVER WRITTEN A LINE SELLS ARTICLE BEFORE COMPLETING COURSE

"Before completing the N. I. A. course, I sold a feature to Screenland Magazine for $50. That resulted in an immediate assignment to do another for the same magazine. After gaining confidence with successive feature stories, I am now working into the fiction field. Previous to enrolling in the N. I. A., I had never written a line for publication, nor seriously expected to do so."—Gene E. Levant, 116 West Ave., 28, Los Angeles, Calif.

Writing Aptitude Test — FREE!

THE Newspaper Institute of America offers a free Writing Aptitude Test. Its object is to discover new recruits for the army of men and women who add to their income by fiction and article writing. The Writing Aptitude Test is a simple but expert analysis of your latent ability, your powers of imagination, logic, etc. Not all applicants pass this test. Those who do are qualified to take the famous N. I. A. course based on the *practical* training given by big metropolitan dailies.

This is the New York Copy Desk Method which teaches you to write by writing. You develop your *individual* style instead of trying to copy that of others. You "cover" actual assignments such as metropolitan reporters get. Although you work at home, on your own time, you are constantly guided by experienced writers. It is really fascinating work. Each week you see new progress. In a matter of months you can acquire the coveted "professional" touch. Then you're ready for market with greatly improved chances of making sales.

VETERANS
THIS COURSE APPROVED FOR VETERANS' TRAINING

Mail the Coupon Now

But the first step is to take the Writing Aptitude Test. It requires but a few minutes and costs nothing. So mail the coupon now. Make the first move towards the most enjoyable and profitable occupation—writing for publication! Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y. (Founded 1925)

Free

Newspaper Institute of America
One Park Ave., New York 16, N. Y.

Send me, without cost or obligation, your Writing Aptitude Test and further information about writing for profit.

Mr.
Mrs.
Miss .....

Address .....

( ) Check here if you are eligible under the G.I. Bill of Rights.
(All correspondence confidential. No salesman will call on you.) 94-A-66S

Copyright 1947, Newspaper Institute of America.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seems to realize and has, alas, passed them by. On the whole, the comeback tries have proved pretty disheartening to writer and editor alike. Too bad.

Now—on this anthology matter. Certainly the most important anthology of stf to appear to date is the Groff Conklin THE BEST IN SCIENCE FICTION. As an examination of copyright listings and the introduction will reveal, it was put out by our most respected rival through an independent publishing house. Yet a number of stories from both TWS and SS were present. And this despite the fact that the compiler's views of stf as a whole are greatly at variance with our own.

Yes. Charteris did put one of the grab-bag jobs together, but it was not exclusively ours. A number of our stories, however, appeared in it.

As for the alien jobs, the less said the better. Too few of their compilers have read anything but Bulwer-Lytton, Verne, H. G. Wells, Dunsany, Conan Doyle and, possibly, Robert Nathan. Which is not bad reading at that, but hardly covers the modern field.

SUICIDE NOTE
by Wally Weber

Dear Editor: If this thing gets into print my life will not be worth the effort it takes to write this letter. You see, I have a complaint against most of the letters appearing in The Ether Vibrates. As you can plainly see, this can be fatal.

It all started when a letter of mine crept into the letter department of STARTLING. After I read it I could find no reason for it being there. "Why in the world would a thing like that be published?" I asked myself (a sure sign of insanity). The only possible reason was that it was used as filter material!

This led me on to more research in the matter. Do you fully realize the amount of uninteresting trash that appears in The Ether Vibrates each issue? Let me show you what I mean. I hope the fellows I am using for examples don't find out about this because they were just picked at random from the September issue.

The first victim will be Tom Pace. The complete letter was made up of his own opinions that were of little interest to anybody except himself and a few readers who wanted to compare opinions with him. He presented them in a rather dull manner as far as the average reader would be concerned.

Who cares who he thinks the best author is except possibly himself and the author? Certainly you can get a general opinion from the readers without *printing* the letters. His comments on the letters were not written in a way that would interest anyone but those directly affected by the comments.

Example number two will be Fred Ross Burgess. This is the type of letter that you should be looking for. When he said what he thought of the cover he didn't make a dry-as-dust statement such as, "I don't like the cover," or "The girl on the cover was ugly." Instead, he made it rather entertaining.

And look at that comment on Michael Wigodsky. "My name is Ranoschnerd Gleep and I'm only two days old etc." It's stuff like that that readers get a kick out of. Even he put in a lot of comments that were of value to only a few. If comments are to be made they should be written in personal letters or else in an entertaining way.

For another letter we could use the one by Jack Clements. He summed the whole thing up in his opening sentence: "With the May issue in hand, somewhat worn from handling, your reviewer sits down at his L. C. Smith and tells Ye. Ed. and Ye. Hon. Readers how it stacked up with him." That's just what too many are doing now, telling how things stacked up with them in a rather dull manner.

The reason letters from Chad Oliver and Joe Kennedy are so well liked is because they are entertaining. Nobody gives a hoot if Joe liked the lead story or if Chad thought so-and-so wrote a good letter. It's the tricky wording and humor that set their letters above the average.

The fault doesn't lie in the readers either. The fault is in your own back yard, Mr. Editor. Many of the letters now being published should only be read by you to determine what the readers want. If you *really* want a good letter section, just be a mite more choosy about what gets published. Even if the department is small it will encourage better letters. There isn't much good having a large letter section if it isn't entertaining.—*Box 858, Ritzville, Washington.*

Okay, Wally. Yours for more interesting letters to the ETHERGRAMS department. Speaking of own back yards, why not start with yours?

Gloop, gleep.

CIRCLE OF INFINITY
by S. Vernon McDaniel

Dear Editor: Now let's see—if sidewalks *do* go backwards, then the hands of a clock must go backwards, too! And if the hands of a clock go backwards, then time is traveling in the opposite direction. Consequently, there is no future. We are traveling into the past, and our future is merely the recollection of the past we are traveling into—and celery can't change its spots . . .

At any rate, you can see I liked CIRCLE OF ZERO very much. So much in fact, that I just *had* to write you. Print more like these! More and more and more. I eat 'em up!

LORD OF THE STORM was very good material. You can give it second place and tell Hammond that I enjoyed it.

BUT—and there must be a but—GAHHHH! Another *Tubby* story. All wrapped up in a fine summer package, with plots, atom bombs, shrink-tablets etc. Good heavens! Prithee, kind soul, how could a man, no matter how small, walk around on a block of plutonium? The stuff's radioactive, in case you didn't know. Even if it was a dream, you can tell Cummings he shouldn't be *so* stupid!

And LODANA was just as bad. It could, no doubt, have been much, much better. But as it stood . . . another GAHHHH! The ending was what got me . . . IT WAS PUTRID! So there!

NOW—the illustrious TEV. Sarge—*blast it!* I mean, *Editor*, this is the BEST Tev I have seen in an infinity period! Which means, of course, that an infinity period is as long as from now to when the Sarge went out of date. But, boy oh boy, even without the Sarge, bless him, Tev is *good!*

Whether or not ReWard is right, still let's have that anniversary issue in '49 . . . please?

Sneary fine, as usual. McDaniel good. To J. Wasso: How'dja guess, bud?

Now, about R. leRoy: Lay off him, fellas? I have been corresponding fluently with R. for the last few months, and he is a fine fellow. He *is* male, Billie. And he is married, I am told, to a Venus named Phyllis. His phonetics are funny, and his Philosophy is philanthropic, though at times it is fuzzy. I LIKE HIM!

By the way, I believe Sneary's spelling is done on purpose. At any rate, I once saw a letter of his which was *not* mispelled. (In a competitor, no less!).

Tell the Blarsted H'Englishman to tell us the names of those characters . . . We'll get 'em!

Well, I guess that's all for this run . . . See you later, you eight-sided Betelguesian swamp-ox!—*1010 Garcia Road, Santa Barbara, California.*

Sneary's letters used to appear here correctly spelled—until we got tired of making the monumental changes required. We liked him au naturel and miss him this ish. But blame the job you saw on the other editor.

We'll do what we can about the anniversary issue . . . seems like a good idea to us but the top brass has the final say. Wonder if Robyn sings or talks or whatever he does phonetically. Just idle curiosity as his trick stuff has us groggy too.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BULLOCK BARBECUE
by Jerri Bullock (Fee-mail)

Dear Ed: No, NO! I absolutely *refuse* to believe it! Not one trace of a she-male on the Sept. cover of STARTLING! I can't believe it, I won't! Bergey *must* have at least one lurking somewhere. Is he ill, or has his persecution complex finally caught up with him? Enough? All, right, I will torment ye no further.

I'm sorry I didn't write any comment on the July ish. I guess it was because I was shocked to find my letter had actually been printed in TWS's August issue. (Sigh.) As far as this (Sept.) ish goes, the short stories can just keep on going. Ugh!

Your novels and novelettes are usually so swell both in S and TWS, that I can't understand why your shorts haven't been up to par lately. If they don't get better soon, I'm even gonna try my luck and see if *I* can get one printed. Who knows, miracles *do* happen!

I sure liked Hammond's novel, and "The Circle of Zero", although the latter had a strange theme. It's a wonder to me that stf authors remain sane for long, after dreaming up the plots they do, and taking so much heckling from fans. I don't think I could write the way Weinbaum does and stay out of a padded cell for long. I'd be wondering if I'd written the stuff I was writing before, and whether I'd written anything like it in the future—ga-a-a! I had better stop before *I* drive *you* mad!

Just let me get the rest of my two bits in, and I'll leave you in peace(s). Your mentioning H. G. Wells, and Jules V. brings to mind a book I read when I was so-o high. It was a Tarzan novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs, and dwelt on the subject of the ape-man's travels to the North Pole to enter a tunnel which led to the inner Earth.

Supposedly this inside World was just like the outside, except the sun rose in the West and set in the East, etc. I gathered it was the cave-man era because all the women in it were dragged around by their hair! (Between you and me I think Burroughs swiped his material from Symms.) Will leave now, hoping you can find a space for this little tid-bit in your mag. —*22200 Lemon Avenue, Hayward, California.*

Never read the Burroughs opus in question, but how in hades, Jerri, if your memory is correct, did he get a sun inside the Earth? Poor Weinbaum—it's a shame he died so young. He was on the way to becoming top man all right. If you found CIRCLE OF ZERO pate-addling, wait until you feel the impact of THE BRINK OF INFINITY in our next H of F. You'll be muttering multiplication tables in your alphabet soup.

HYDE OFF US
by Gene A. Hyde

Dear Editor: Sorry to have to say this, but the September iss was decidedly below standard. "The Circle of Zero" rates first. Interesting theory. The past is the future and the future the past. In other words, if we live long enough we'll end up where we started.

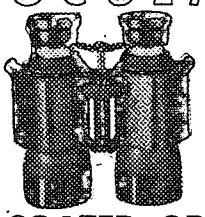
"Lord of the Storm" was second. It seemed sort of muddled at the beginning and end. In the middle it cleared up somewhat, but the continuity was hard to follow.

"Lodana" was third, and "Up and Atom" was last. And if there had been a hundred more yarns in the iss, "Up and Atom" would still have been last. I don't know why you print these things unless it's to give the fans an idea of how bad a yarn can actually get. If so, you've succeeded.

I have one comment to make on "The Circle of Zero", and that pertains to the million trillion grains of sand routine. According to the story, if you draw one grain at a time and put it back each time, your chances of drawing the black grain would be a million to one on each draw.

This is O.K. so far, but Weinbaum then states that after you have drawn half of the grains, your chances go up to even. Obviously this is wrong. If you return

[*Turn page*]

SURPLUS SALE!
Liko
BINOCULARS
45 x 3.5

ONLY $6.98
BRAND NEW
IMMEDIATE DELIVERY
with COATED OPTICS
and Interpupillary Adjustment
First Time in America! Now you can have a close-up of all events with those all-purpose heavy duty binoculars. Precision lenses. Coated optics, interpupillary adjustment and other features found only in high priced binoculars. Carrying case and shoulder straps included. SEND NO MONEY. 10 day no risk money back guarantee. Order today! Ideal gift!
VETERAN'S EMPORIUM, Dept. B-7
1148 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Veteran's Emporium, Dept. B-7
1148 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Send me.....Liko Binoculars. ....Send C.O.D. plus charges
.....I enclose $..... Send postpaid.
Name .....
Address .....
City..... State.....
Be sure to add 20% Fed. Tax ($1.40)

This Easy Way TEACHES GUITAR AT HOME IN ONLY 30 Days Or Money Back

Astounding new Jim Major Home Method teaches you to play guitar easily, quickly, without long hours practicing scales or exercises. *No musical knowledge necessary.* Play many popular songs, hymns in very short time. Limited time offer: 30 lessons, complete course for only $1.69. Send no money . . . pay postman $1.69 plus postage. (Cash with order we pay postage.) Money back guarantee. Send today to Jim Major, Room 15-A, 230 East Ohio, Chicago 11, Ill.

HOW TO DO WONDERS ON AN ACRE!
MY WIFE and I would like to send you our FREE BOOK about our "HAVE-MORE" PLAN for "a little land—a lot of living." Tells how to do wonders with a garden, fruits, berries, poultry, livestock, etc.—all on small scale—in spare time. Many new devices, scientific methods. Special house plans and layouts for small acreages. It's a whole wonderful NEW SCIENCE of living—a healthier, happier, more independent life—on the little place you've always dreamed of having. Just drop us a post card today for our FREE BOOK—32 pages—50 illustrations.

ED ROBINSON ○ BOX 4901 ○ NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

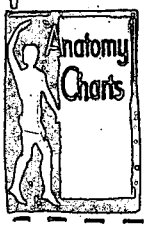
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Learn this Profitable Profession

IN 90 DAYS AT HOME

MONEY-MAKING CAREER OPEN to MEN and WOMEN, 18 to 50

Hundreds of men and women between 18 and 50 make $10 to $20 in a single day giving Scientific Swedish Massage and Hydro-Therapy treatments. There is big demand from doctors, hospitals, sanatoriums and clubs. Graduates earn large full time incomes from these or in private practice in their own offices. Others make good money from home treatments given in spare time. Learn this interesting, money-making profession in your own home, through our home study course. Same instructors as in our nationally known resident school. You can win independence and prepare for future security by qualifying for our Diploma. Course can be completed in 3 to 4 months. Many earn while they learn. Begin your training at once.



Anatomy Charts & Booklet FREE

Enroll now and we will include, at no extra cost, many needed supplies. Fit yourself to help meet growing demand for Scientific Swedish Massage. Send the coupon at once for complete details. Anatomy Charts and 32-page Illustrated Booklet. FREE, postpaid.

THE COLLEGE OF SWEDISH MASSAGE
Dept. 863-A, 100 East Ohio St., Chicago 11, Illinois

Please send me FREE and postpaid, Anatomy Charts, 32-page Booklet and complete details on Home Training.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Learn BAKING At Home

Baking is one of America's high industries in wages. Nearly depression-proof. Thorough basic home course lays sound foundation. If you have aptitude, write for FREE BOOKLET, "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."
National Baking School, 1315 Mich. Ave., Dept. 1801, Chicago 5

Fit-Rite makes False Teeth TIGHT

Makes loose dental plates fit snugly and comfortably. LASTS for MONTHS!

Simply squeeze on dental plate and put it in your mouth. Hardens and becomes part of plate. Money-back guarantee.

FREE Generous package of Dental Plate Cleanser with each order. Send $1.00 or mailed parcel post collect.

Fit-Rite Co., 1573 Milwaukee Ave.
Dept. 1-82, Chicago, Ill.

If Ruptured Try This Out

Modern Protection Provides Great Comfort and Holding Security

Without Torturous Truss Wearing

An "eye-opening" revelation in sensible and comfortable reducible rupture protection may be yours for the asking, without cost or obligation. Simply send name and address to William S. Rice, Inc., Dept. I-L, Adams, N. Y., and full details of the new and different Rice Method will be sent you Free. Without hard flesh-gouging pads or tormenting pressure, here's a Support that has brought joy and comfort to thousands—by releasing them from Trusses with springs and straps that bind and cut. Designed to securely hold a rupture up and in where it belongs and yet give freedom of body and genuine comfort. For full information—write today!

each grain to the barrel, your chances remain the same no matter how many times you draw. On the other hand, if you did not return the grains to the barrel, your chances would still be half a million trillion to one after you had drawn out half of the white grains.

The only way you could have an even chance of drawing the black grain would be to draw half of all the grains at one time, or else keep drawing single grains until you had only two grains left. See what I mean? But enough of this, I have white and black spots in front of my eyes now.

I've noticed that the Editor gnashes his teeth, tears his hair, etc. every time someone praises Lovecraft. Tell me, Editor, ol 'boy, just what do you have against the late H.P.? Now wait, don't throw my letter in the trash can. I don't intend to sing his praises to the sky. All I've to say about the man in question is that he was a fairly good writer (and I think you'll agree with me Editor), but I see no reason to face Providence (that's where he was born, I think) and bow three times every time I see or hear his name. I was just wondering what you had against him, that makes you utter not one kind word for him. After all he wasn't a hack writer, even though he wasn't the best.—*1807 N. Madison, Peoria, Illinois.*

Okay, let's say we're against beavers in literature. In this category we hasten to include such hirsute-faced literati as Dr. Henry Van Dyke and Joseph Conrad. Shaw's beard we have always believed to be a fake. If we gave you the real reason for our dislike of Lovecraft, you'd be down here with a blunderbuss loaded with tenpenny nails.

CARTERBELT
by Lin Carter

Dear Ed: The Sept. *STARTLING* graced our newsstands, and I'd like to take time off from my overdue correspondence to drop a word of comment here and there, OK?

Firstly, the cover. A very good cover. One of the best yet, I might even say. It reminded me of the cover for "City of Glass" way back in '42. Let Bergey run rampant with space scenes and alien landscapes for awhile. It'll be a relief from the undraped mademoiselles that usually take the cover spot. Finlay's pics were excellent . . . Kiemle and Parkhurst were fair. No Marchioni this ish—thanks!

Secondly, the stories. They slumped a little. Not much, just a teentsy bit. Hammond's epic was interesting. . . . I'm always rather partial to weather control stories, and this was one of the best. I wish he'd described a little bit more, how the weather was controlled, tho. I'm a bit vague, when it comes to jockeying storm and air masses around. The plot was fair, characters excellent, style smooth. Allover effect: quite good. Yup.

Although I'd read the Hall of Fame yarn in its original form, 'twas nice to read it again. Excellent pics. Boy, I'd give half my paycheck to have that Finlay on page 71. Wow.

The shorts . . . well . . . let's not discuss them.

Thirdly, the letters. Very good this time. Very. Sneary, Burgess, Pace, Clements, and a few other people had some quite interesting letters. Tom Pace: you must remember that ERB is about the only modern stf writer to become a success in the book field. His Tarzan books are world famous. His Mars, Venus and Pellucidar series are only slightly less well known. His yarns (the Mars book, f'rinstance) are masterpieces of alien atmosphere and stuff. I think so, anyway. Les Cole: I didn't pay any attention to the type

A LAUGH ON EVERY PAGE OF

CARTOON HUMOR

NOW ON SALE—25c AT ALL STANDS!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of stories they wrote. I evaluated them by their popularity and so forth.—*865 - 20th Ave. So., St. Petersburg, Florida.*

You'll get more Bradbury, Lin, but Brackett seems to have strayed permanently from the fold, alas.

GOING UP!
by Wilkie Connor

Dear Editor: The September issue of STARTLING STORIES finally made it to West Gastonia, and as usual, I purchased the first copy to "swim into my ken."

Those readers who object to Bergey's FEMS will have to find something else to beef about this time. No women on the cover at all! Which makes the cover a complete wash-out with me.

I see where Tom Pace liked one of my letters. So someone besides the editor reads the letters. (Oh, yes, Fred Burgess reads 'em, too. He mentioned me. Which is surprising. I didn't know Burgess could read.)

SS continues to go up. I can think of no pressing improvements. Except, of course, more frequent issues —and thicker. I suppose, though, such improvements will have to await improvements in the paper situation.

So Kuttner has hied himself to the West Coast again. I remember an article of his in a writer's annual expressing a desire to find a sleepy little Southern town and settle down. I half hoped he would do just that. I even hoped he would pick this town. (It's sleepy enough!) I dislike for my favorite authors to hang too closely to Hollywood. There's too much money being paid authors from that city! Look what happened to Leigh Brackett! (And I don't mean her wedding!)

Thanks again for another swell issue of S.S. and keep 'em coming.—*Box 2392, West Gastonia, N. C.*

It should happen to us—Ed.

ONSTAGE
by Peter W. Tappan

Dear Editor: Re the September issue of SS.

At last we have a Hall of Fame Classic which is really a classic. "When Planets Clashed" was good but certainly no classic; its sequel, "The Disc-Men of Jupiter" was mediocre, and "The Life Detour" was only fair. Weinbaum's "The Circle of Zero," however, deserves highest praise.

The proof that everyone has existed before and will exist again was indeed ingenious, and even the astounding results achieved through hypnosis were credible to me as I have myself experimented with hypnotism and have seen equally startling phenomena.

Weinbaum's imagination was indeed fertile. I wish one of your readers would be so kind as to send me a list of his other stories and where they appeared as I have read only two and consider them both excellent.

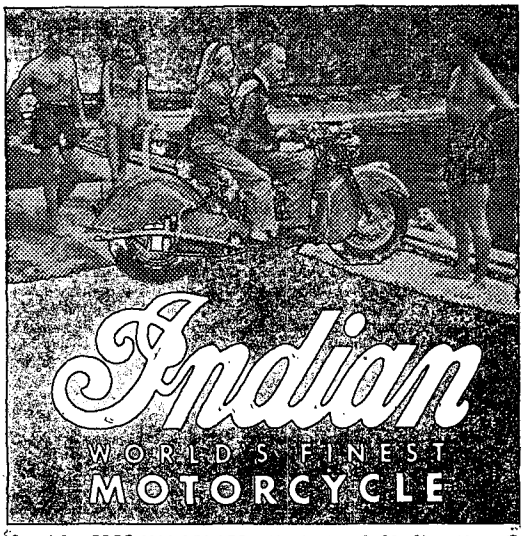
"Lord of the Storm" was very good. I see that Leinster is coming up again in the November issue. The man amazes me. I don't see how he can turn out so many stories and yet present fresh ideas in each one. I have yet to read a Leinster tale I didn't like.

I don't mind humorous science fiction if it is really humorous. Margaret St. Clair's stories are very good. But tell Ray Cummings to get hold of an artist to draw his "Tubby" stories in comic-strip form and publish them in a comic book. In my opinion, they have no place in SS. Children would probably enjoy them, but I don't. Judging from TEV, I would say that the bulk of your readers are more mature than Mr. Cummings seems to think.

The illustrations were unusually good this issue. I am especially fond of Finlay's demons on page 70, and the cover is one of the best Bergey has ever done. Your magazine is certainly improving.

Editor, have you read "The Whisperer in Darkness"? If not, I advise you to do so. If you have, I can't understand your dislike for Lovecraft. I don't think any story has ever caused my hair to stand on end, but this one came closer to it than any other I can think of.

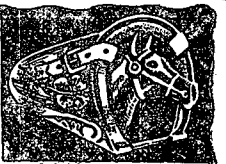
[*Turn page*]



Send for FREE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE, "Indian News"
DEALER INQUIRIES INVITED
Dept. 36, Indian Motorcycle Co., Springfield 9, Mass.

OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD!
TRAIN FOR A FUTURE IN
DIESEL

Prepare for the big earning power of Diesel Trained Men. Start learning at home, in spare time. UEI's easy, practical training covers all phases of DIESEL engine operation, fuel systems, auxiliary equipment, repairs and maintenance. When home course is completed, you come to Chicago for actual shop practice on DIESEL MOTORS under expert instructors, at UEI's fine, modern school.
BEGIN AT ONCE—GET ALL THE FACTS FREE. WRITE TODAY!
DIESEL DIVISION UTILITIES ENGINEERING INSTITUTE
2521 Sheffield Ave., Dept. 1028-D, Chicago 14, Illinois

STERLING SILVER
LADY LUCK HORSE SHOE Ring
Statuesque Horse's head, horse shoe and 4-Leaf Clover design. Handsomely formed from solid Sterling Silver. Oxidized, hand-buffed finish.

Styled for men or women.
SEND NO MONEY! Just clip ad and mail with name, address and ring size. Pay postman only $3.98 (tax included) plus postage. Wear for 5 days. If not delighted, return for full refund.
Western Craftsmen Dept. 506A 1904 Farnam Omaha 2, Nebr.

GET EYE-GLASSES by MAIL
Send No Money!
16-DAY TRIAL Offer
NEWEST STYLES

NEW LOW PRICES
Send for FREE Scientific Sight Test Chart and Catalog. Write today.
U.S. EYE-GLASSES CO. 1557 MILWAUKEE AVENUE Dept. 1-82, CHICAGO 22, ILL.

LEARN AT HOME
TO BE A PRACTICAL NURSE
You can learn practical nursing at home in spare time. Course endorsed by physicians. Thousands of graduates.
HIGH SCHOOL NOT REQUIRED
49th year. One graduate has charge of 10-bed hospital. Another saved $400 while learning. Equipment included. Men, women, 18 to 60. Easy tuition payments. Trial plan.
CHICAGO SCHOOL OF NURSING
Dept. 4212, 100 East Ohio Street, Chicago 11, Ill.
Please send free booklet and 16 sample lesson pages.
Name.....
City.....State.....Age.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTRODUCTORY OFFER
$1.98

All-in-one Cigarette Lighter and Full-Pack Case gives you cigarettes and lights together as you want them. Streamlined, smart, modern . . . a wonderful convenience, the ideal gift. FREE . . . ANY NAME ENGRAVED ON CASE IN 23-KARAT GOLD! For men or women. Built for lifetime service of beautiful plastic. Deep-well lighter holds amazingly large supply of fluid. **SEND NO MONEY . . . 7-DAY TRIAL.** Order on trial inspection and approval. On arrival deposit $1.98 plus C. O. D. Use 7 days. If not delighted return for refund. (Send $1.98 with order and we pay postage.) Be sure to send name to be engraved. (Engraving not available in Canada.)
M & S SALES, Dept. 15-A, 1101 N. Paulina, CHICAGO 22
Canadian address: 22 College St., Toronto, Canada

LEARN MEAT CUTTING
At Home—In Spare Time

Get into the vital meat industry. Concise, practical Home Training based on 25 years proven instruction method used at National's famous resident school. Prepares you for bigger pay as Meat Cutter, supervisor, market manager or more money in your own store. Go as rapidly as your spare time permits. Diploma. Start NOW to turn your spare hours into money. Send for FREE bulletin today. No obligation.
National School of Meat Cutting, Inc., Div. TG-27, Toledo 4, Ohio

ASTHMA
WRITE FOR 10-DAY TRIAL OFFER!
IF YOU SUFFER FROM BRONCHIAL ASTHMA PAROXYSMS, from coughs, gasping wheezing — write quick for daring **10-DAY TRIAL OFFER.** Inquiries from so-called "hopeless" cases especially invited.
NACOR, 423-L, State Life Bldg., Indianapolis 4, Ind.

OLD LEG TROUBLE

Easy to use Viscose Home Method. Heals many old leg sores caused by leg congestion, varicose veins, swollen legs and injuries or no cost for trial if it fails to show results in 10 days. Describe your trouble and get a FREE BOOK.
T. G. VISCOSE COMPANY
140 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago 2, Illinois

NEW CHEMICAL MITT
Sensational! DRY Window Cleaner! Uses no water, no messy liquids. Chemically Treated. Simply glide over windows; leaves glass sparkling clear. No heating water, no heavy buckets to carry. No rags, powders, sponges, chamois. No mess or muss. No red chapped hands. Dust, dirt, grime, fog disappear like magic. *Wonderful for auto windows, windshields!*
SAMPLES FOR AGENTS Sample offer sent immediately to all who send name at once. A penny postal will do. SEND NO MONEY—just your name. **KRISTEE CO., 3475 Bar St., AKRON, OHIO.**

Herewith my vote for the return of Cap Future Magazine. I figure that if enough fans ask for it we'll get it. Don't be bashful, you C. F. enthusiasts, write in! —*c/o the Keene Summer Theatre, Keene, New Hampshire.*

Cap Future, alas, will need an awful lot of plugging for resuscitation. As for "The Whisperer . . . ," we're shopping for a fright wig right now. We still think the late HPL had an inalienable habit of falling through trap doors composed of his own lurid adjectives. But that is only our opinion.

ONE-SIDED
by David "Doc" Rasche

Dear Editor: Write on only one side of the page, huh? I'll bet you want me to double space too. Silly rule, that. You know that you don't have to worry about the insect situation, meaning you don't have to worry about what will crawl from under a STFan letter if you have to turn it over. Wassa matter? Lazy?

But on to the September issue of SS. *Lord of the Storm* was a fair to middling piece of writing, but I've seen better in your mag. The plot was good, but the execution wasn't. In, out, and around this neck of the woods, we are taught that there are only seven basic plots—I wish friend Hammond had used any of the others.

Naturally, *Circle of Zero* rates four bells. Without a doubt it was one of the best stories of the mid-thirties. To call it THE best would be stretching things more than a little, but what the heck—it still wuz gud. Wish to heaven (I'M serious) that Weinbaum could write some more.

As for the other two stories, *Lodana* and *Up and Atom*. PHOOEY! I wish there were no libel statutes so I cud really say what I mean. *Lodana* and Jacobi apparently not too well acquainted. This is one of those stories that people are always calling "hack" and, brother, the hack that Jacobi made of this one was sad. The story could have been so good if he'd just used a little imagination. As for the *other* one: it smelled as bad as the pun. Nuff sed!

On to the illustrations. Bergey really hit the mood of the story. For once I can really say that a picture fitted the story, both in mood and configuration; and the king-sized character making with thunderbolts was my idea of what Zeus must have looked like. Maybe that's why I liked it. The interiors by Finlay were, as per usual, good. BUT, my favourite was the one on p. 71, for obvious reasons. Please, Boss, could I get the original for that. Please, PLEASE!

Sneary. HUM-M-M-M. What constitutes libel? Well, I just said it. Don't misunderstand me, Rick old boy, your content I can take but your spelin gets me daown. Gess I'm just a prude fum way bak. Same goes for S. V. McDaniel—him and his pomes.

You can tell Ward the reward he needs is a short course in gagwriting. Also you might remind him that the most honourable Wm. Shakespeare sed that the pun was the lowest form of humor—Ward's couldn't have been lower—right below the belt.

Open note to Robyn le Roy: Chum, did you ever read *Mehim in ce Klasrum*? Read and Heed!

I note with mixed emotions a fair modicum of feminine genders scattered amongst the pages of ye old *Ethergrams*. Gad! Could this be a trend to prove that the modern woman is awakening to science, or are they just incurable romanticists? In any event, I was happy to see that "The Old Sarge" has a feminine admirer. Didn't know mag. editors were admired by anyone—human, that is. I refer, of course to Ruby A. Anderson. And a Miss too. Well, it was about time for the world to come to an end anyway.

While I'm noting things concerning the "gentle" sex I might note that I am writing in the midst of many Yankee *Femms*. And a "down Easter" at that. May I, ma'am, extend mah hahtiest felicitations to yo' all, and wish yo' a mos' enjoyable time amidst STF? Ah'm referrin, o' cose to MISS (I hope, I hope) Virginia (purty name that) Maglione.

By the way, Billie Randolph, be careful of that Robyn character. Anybody who uses that brand of phonetics should oughta be in Bellevue's observation ward. And you are from that Country of A STATE, Texas, so be careful.—*P. O. Box 492, Emory University, Georgia.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yuk, yuk, and yuk.

FANNIVERSARY WALTZ
by Marion "Astra" Zimmer

Dear Editor: This is my fanniversary. One year ago tonight I picked up my first copy of STARTLING STORIES . . . the issue containing the unforgettable DARK WORLD of Kuttner. Since then I have read a LOT of fantasy, a LOT of STF, but I haven't yet found anything which will compete with this, my first love—nor any magazine which I like better than STARTLING, ditto.

One Year. Six novels, several novelets and many, many shorts. Kind of a mixed year, ranging from the zany "Soma Racks" to the lyrical beauty of Weinbaum and his "Circle of Zero." I've seen Ye Sarge and his goofy gremlins give way to a friendly editor and obstreperous hacks blossom forth into constructive thinkers (Yes, Rick and Guerry, I mean you) and have made some fine friends among your readers. All in all—my year of reading SS and TWS hasn't been wasted time or money—and I am all set for another year . . . hoping it will be as profitable—and as enjoyable.

Undoubtedly, the best writer in your long string is Henry Kuttner, in any of his various disguises. Willkie Connor, in the current ETHER VIBRATES has expressed my sentiments almost perfectly. "Kuttner is the greatest writer of all time"—in his chosen field that is.

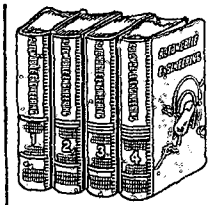
There—I too have gone on record. His peak stories are the greatest ever written, and while occasionally he descends to the level of the hack, still, all can be forgiven, even a Pete Manx, for the sake of a VALLEY OF THE FLAME or a CALL HIM DEMON or a DARK WORLD. However, he does much better in the field of fantasy than science fiction. His psychological yarns are unequaled, but his fantasies are indescribable.

[*Turn page*]

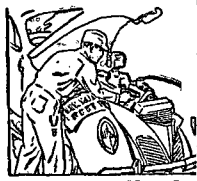
MORE PAGES! MORE PICTURES!

America's Favorite Picture Magazine
Now Bigger and Better Than Ever!

NOW ON SALE—15c AT ALL STANDS!



AUTO BOOKS ON APPROVAL



SEND NO MONEY. Just mail the coupon for a complete set of 4 Big, Thick Auto Books. 20th Edition. 2800 Pages! Whether you are a mechanic or helper, expert or apprentice, auto owner or driver, take immediate advantage of this FREE EXAMINATION OFFER.

MAKE GOOD MONEY NOW
HOLD A PERMANENT JOB

America wants its automobiles kept in good repair. Men with "know how" are in demand, at big pay. These books will help you get and hold an important job, or give you a chance to go into business for yourself now or later. Any man who half tries to improve himself can learn auto servicing and repairing by this quick reference method. Use the JIFFY INDEX to find easily understood answer to any auto problem. These wonder books prepared by eleven of America's great automobile engineers. Many hundreds of valuable illustrations. Send the coupon TODAY.

CAN YOU FIX IT?
These wonder books tell step by step HOW to make difficult repairs and adjustments, how to keep a car at maximum efficiency, including latest improvements in car design and operation. Engine troubles and how to correct them well covered.

4 BIG, THICK VOLUMES
2800 pages, 2000 illustrations, wiring diagrams, etc., including Diesel engines. Beautiful modernistic, washable cloth binding.

A year's consulting privileges with our engineers now given with these books without extra charge.

Vocational Publishers Since 1898

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY, Dept. A149
Drexel Ave. at 58th St., Chicago 37, Ill.
I would like to examine your 4-Volume Set of Auto Books. I will pay the delivery charges only, but if I choose I may return them express collect. If after 10 days' use I prefer to keep them, I will send you $2 and pay the balance at the rate of only $3 a month until $24.80 has been paid. Include consulting service as offered above.

Name .....
Address .....
City ..... State .....
Please attach letter stating age, occupation, employer's name and address, and name and address of at least one business man as reference. Men in service, also please give home address.

LAW
STUDY AT HOME for PERSONAL SUCCESS and LARGER EARNINGS. 39 years expert instruction—over 108,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All texts furnished. Easy payments. G.I. Approved. Send for FREE BOOK.
AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW
Dept. 84-T, 646 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill.

PICTURE RING $1.

Exquisite Picture Ring—made from any photo. SEND NO MONEY! Mail photo with paper strip for ring size. Pay postman only $1 plus postage. Hand tinted 25c extra. Photo returned with ring. Money back guarantee.
SEND PHOTO AND RING SIZE NOW!
PICTURE RING CO. Dept. U-26, CINCINNATI 2, Ohio

Made from Any Photo or Picture! SEND NO MONEY!

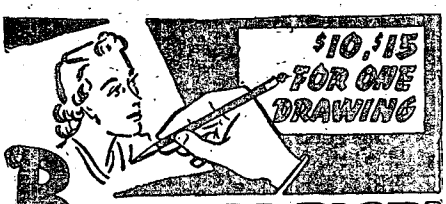
HELP KIDNEYS If BackACHES

Do you suffer from Getting Up Nights, Backache, Nervousness, Leg Pains, Dizziness, Swollen Ankles, Rheumatic Pains, Bladder Weakness, Painful Passages, or feel old and rundown, due to non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles? If so, try Cystex.

This great medicine, a doctor's formula, has helped thousands of sufferers for over 20 years. Usually the very first dose of Cystex starts to work immediately to help you in these three ways: 1. Helps nature remove irritating excess acids, poisonous wastes and certain germs. 2. This cleansing action helps nature alleviate many pains, aches, soreness and stiffness. 3. Helps reduce frequent night and day calls, thus promoting better sleep.

Get Cystex from your druggist today. Give it a fair trial as directed on package. Money back guaranteed unless Cystex satisfies you.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Be an ARTIST!

—Train at Home in Your Spare Time

The fascinating field of Art offers commercial opportunities to men and women. COMMERCIAL ART, CARTOONING, DESIGNING all in one complete course. We prepare you step-by-step. Trained Artists are capable of earning $50, $60, $75 a week. TWO ART OUTFITS included with training. FREE BOOK, "Art for Pleasure and Profit—" describes course and method of instruction. STATE AGE. Course approved under G. I. Bill.

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART, Studio 661 M
2115—15th St., N. W. WASHINGTON 5, D. C.

FREE BOOK gives details

Stop Getting Up Nights

TRY THIS FREE

If you get up many times at night due to Irritation of Bladder or Urinary Tract, and have never used PALMO TABLETS we want you to try them at our risk. We will send you a full-size package from which you are to use 20 tablets FREE. If not delighted at the palliative relief received, return the package and you owe us nothing. We mean it. Send No Money. No C.O.D. to pay. Write today and we will send your PALMO TABLETS by return mail post-paid. Address — H. D. POWERS CO., Dept. 129-M, Box 135, Battle Creek, Mich.

AIR RIFLES **BENJAMIN** AIR PISTOLS

PIONEERS - LEADERS

SEND FOR FREE FOLDER OF LATEST MODELS TODAY

If you want a REAL GUN for PRACTICAL USE inside or outdoors get a SAFE - CLEAN - ECONOMICAL - BENJAMIN with Adjustable Power and Amazing Accuracy. For BEST RESULTS use BENJAMIN H-C PELLETS. WRITE AT ONCE.

BENJAMIN AIR RIFLE CO., 876 MARION ST., ST. LOUIS 4, MO.

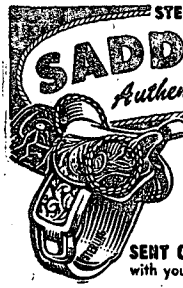
BE A DETECTIVE

WORK HOME or TRAVEL. Experience unnecessary. DETECTIVE Particulars FREE. Write to GEO. R. H. WAGNER, 125 W. 86th St., N. Y.

STERLING SILVER

SADDLE RING

Authentic Western Design



Authentic miniature reproduction of romantic western saddle. Handsomely formed from solid Sterling Silver by expert silver craftsmen. Massive style for men! Dainty style for women and children!

SENT ON APPROVAL! clip this ad and mail with your name, address, ring size and style.

SEND NO MONEY! When ring arrives, pay $4.95 plus a few cents postage or send cash, check, or money order, and we pay postage. Wear this sensational ring for 5 days. If not delighted, return for full refund.

WESTERN CRAFTSMEN
Dept. 606K 1904 FARNAM ST, OMAHA 2, NEB.

Other laurels go to Edmond Hamilton—whose STAR OF LIFE was one of the best "immortality" stories ever written . . . and for the most interesting heroine (Thayn) in any space-opera. Mostly, in this type of story, the woman is either a space-suited spoiled baby or an interstellar glamma gal. But Thayn was HUMAN and wonderful.

Another whose interplanetary tales deserve comment is Manly Wade Wellman. To him belong honors for the best and the worst HoF printed this year. The best was WHEN PLANETS CLASHED—the worst was its sequel DISK MEN OF JUPITER.

Short stories are mostly indefineable. Very few are remembered long after the magazine folds and the rest, I can't remember whether they were in SS or TWS. However a few DO stand out as excellent—Thiessen's A F R A I D, Kuttner's A B S A L O M and DREAM'S END, Margaret Saint Clair's SOMA RACKS and SUPER WHOST, and the Heinlein shortie in the June ish—COLUMBUS WAS A DOPE. Please give us more like this.

Murray Leinster deserves comment, as his short stories and novelets are invariably excellent while the one long novel he has done—THE LAWS OF CHANCE—was not worth reading. I began it several times, and simply couldn't get interested. I see another Leinsterepic coming up next issue. I hope Murray L can get into the groove, as he is a worthy writer and I was disappointed no end by LAWS.

I have also followed, throughout this year, your letter-columns, and your fanzine reviews. Whenever I feel discouraged I get out my old mags and re-read the fanzine reviews to remind myself that life could be worse (huh?) At last I even got up nerve enuff to submit one of my own to lie beneath your disintegrator.

Thanks—again and again—for a year of wonderful reading. Let's make the next year even better. But then—it would have to be. There is a law of motion and inertia which says that once an object is in motion it tends to keep moving until stopped. And nothing could stop or would want to stop SS on its upward parade. I don't even mind your covers.—*R.F.D. No. 1, East Greenbush, New York.*

Glory, Marion, I hope you're right about this year being better than last. We'll be in there trying anyway, but the job is to make the writers try with us. After all, they have to do the real work.

Confidentially, what is this "Astra" business?

And that, lucky people, brings us to the end of the stardust trail for this symposium. On the whole, a spotty session but not an uninteresting one. Letters ranged from brilliant to the inevitable near-moronic. But I'll pass it.

Keep them coming—we'll run what we can and answer ditto when needed. It's always interesting, occasionally exciting, never dull. So long!

—THE EDITOR.

Read Our Companion Magazine of Science Fiction

THRILLING WONDER STORIES

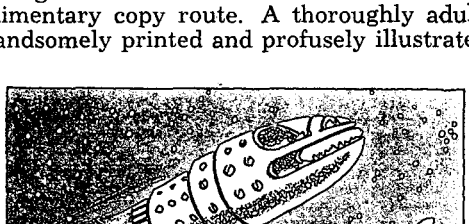
NOW ON SALE—15c AT ALL STANDS!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REVIEW OF THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN PUBLICATIONS

THE fanzines have been coming along in much greater profusion (to say nothing of confusion) than at any time recently. For which, hallelujah. And since, therefore, the actual reviews will take up a lot more space than has been their allotted wont of late, we shall cut the preamble short. However, four or five items received, ranging from the near-sublime to the thoroughly ridiculous, seem to rate special mention.

Most important of these is Editor Constantin Paul Lent's impressive ROCKET-JET FLYING, which Mr. Lent has been kind enough to call to our attention via the complimentary copy route. A thoroughly adult, handsomely printed and profusely illustrated



and diagrammed magazine, it covers the fascinating subject of rocketry from moon projectiles to future artillery and weather rockets.

Published at 130 West 42nd Street, New York 18, N.Y., it sells for $1.00 an issue in the U.S.A., $1.50 in Canada and abroad. Domestic subscriptions (four issues annually) run to $3.00. On the whole it appears well worth the price to rocketaddicts. Mr. Lent is also author and publisher of an exhaustive book on his favorite subject, ROCKETRY ($5.00), which is available at the same address.

Another stf publisher hits for feninterest with Carcosa House's announcement of its presence in the rapidly growing field. Their debut will be made with EDISON'S CONQUEST OF MARS, by Garrett P. Serviss, with an introduction by an old friend, Dr. A. Langley Searles, Ph. D.

This story, which appeared serially in a New York Hearst newspaper way back in 1898, and has lain untouched and unnoticed

[*Turn page*]

NEW SERIES 16 IMPROVED NO-DRIFT FM in the Sensational 1948 MIDWEST RADIOS
5 WAVE BANDS
Separate Chassis Like the Powerful Series 16 AM-FM Above, or Beautiful Radio-Phono Consoles Available
The SYMPHONY GRAND RADIO-PHONOGRAPH AM-FM CONSOLE
A truly magnificent instrument that offers new, improved No-Drift FM, 5 Wave Bands, Automatic Intermix Record Changer that handles both 10" and 12" records, 14½" Panasonic Speaker, and exclusive Midwest Tri-Magnadyne Coil System and Color-Ray Tone Selection. Luxurious Cabinets. Other Console and Table Models with Series 16, 12, and 8 Chassis.
EASY TERMS
30 DAYS TRIAL
SEND FOR FREE Catalog
BUY DIRECT FROM FACTORY AND SAVE
FILL IN COUPON AND MAIL TODAY OR JUST SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON A POSTCARD
MIDWEST RADIO CORPORATION
Dept. 18-L, 909 Broadway, Cincinnati 2, Ohio
Please send me your new FREE 1948 Catalog.
NAME .....
STREET .....
CITY ..... ZONE .... STATE .....

DO YOU WANT TO STOP TOBACCO?
Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with Tobacco Redeemer. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men. Caution: Use only as directed.
30 Years in Business
FREE BOOK
THE NEWELL COMPANY
159 Clayton, Sta., St. Louis 5, Mo.

HARMONICA AND COMPLETE NEW COURSE OF INSTRUCTION $1.49
Not a toy, but a real musical instrument you can learn to play in 15 minutes or no cost! Play waltzes, hymns, popular songs from Hoppy's complete course of instruction—easy to understand, lessons show you how, step by step, and include the music and words to over 200 songs. Get both HARMONICA and complete instructions and song book now for only $1.49. If 7-day trial doesn't thrill you—return for money back in full. SEND NO MONEY. Send name and address, receive HARMONICA plus instructions and song book at our risk. Pay postman $1.49 plus postage. Money back if you can't play in 7 days. (Cash with order, we pay postage.)
Write to:
HOPKINSON CORPORATION
Dept. 15A, 1101 N. Pauline St., Chicago 22, Ill.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What To Do For Pains of ARTHRITIS Try This Free

If you have never used "Rosse Tabs" for pains or arthritis, neuritis, rheumatism, we want you to try them at our risk. We will send you a full-size package from which you are to use 24 Tabs FREE. If not astonished at the palliative relief which you enjoy from your sufferings, return the package and you owe us nothing. We mean it! SEND NO MONEY. Just send name and address and we will rush your Tabs by return mail. ROSSE PRODUCTS CO., Dept. 134, 2708 Farwell Ave., Chicago 45, Illinois.

ASTHMA

Don't let coughing, sneezing, choking, recurring attacks of Bronchial Asthma ruin sleep and energy another day without trying Mendaco. This great internal medicine is tasteless and taken exactly as directed works thru the blood, thus reaching the bronchial tubes and lungs. Usually starts helping nature immediately to remove thick, sticky mucus, thus alleviating coughing and promoting freer breathing and more refreshing sleep. Get Mendaco from your druggist today. Money back guaranteed unless completely satisfied.

RUPTURE!

An amazing Air-Cushion Invention allows body freedom at work or play. Light, neat, cool, sanitary. Durable, cheap. Day and night protection helps Nature support weakened muscles gently but surely. No risk. Sent on Trial! Write NOW for free Booklet and Proof of Results. All correspondence confidential.

Brooks Company, 183 State St., Marshall, Mich.

PANNING GOLD

LEARN HOW NOW

Send name for FREE Illustrated booklet-catalogue, How To Pan Gold and list of mining books and prospectors supplies. Price of gold expected to double soon.

The Old Prospector

Box 21B46 Dutch Flat, Calif.

ARITHMETIC MADE EASY

Amazing palm-size adding machine does all figuring. Adds, Subtracts, Aids in Multiplication & Division up to $99,999,999. All steel, guaranteed 5 years, fits pocket. Millions in use all over the world. We pay postage on prepaid orders or COD plus postage & charges. Money back if not satisfied. Leatherette case 25c add'l.

Free Trial $2.50

TAVELLA SALES CO. Dp 188
25 W. Broadway New York 7, N. Y.

FREE ENLARGEMENT of Your Favorite Photo

FROM FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD FILM STUDIOS

Just to get acquainted we will make a beautiful 5 x 7 enlargement of any picture or negative. Be sure to include color of hair, eyes and clothing and get our bargain offer for having your enlargement beautifully hand colored in oil and mounted in your choice of handsome frames. Please enclose 10c and your original picture or negative will be returned with the free 5 x 7 enlargement postpaid. Act now! Limit 2 to a customer.

HOLLYWOOD FILM STUDIOS
7021 Santa Monica Blvd., Dept. 384, Hollywood, Calif.

since, is apparently a sort of sequel to Herbert George Wells' WAR OF THE WORLDS —you know, the Martian octopus horror so effectively publicized by Orson Welles. It sounds like reasonably good fun, even at $3.50 per copy. Address for those interested is Carcosa House, 774 Caliburn Drive, Los Angeles 2, California. They plan plenty of follow-ups if the Edison deal proves profitable.

Brother Ackerman, Los Angeles and FAPA's own Forrest J., has emerged with something called GLOM, consisting mostly of reviews and a corner cover gag whose explanation would take up far too much space for any weak giggles it might receive. A one-shot, we hope.

Last and definitely least of this issue's specials is an item entitled MOLECULE, perpetrated on strips of 4" by 1½" card with an addressograph by Walter A. Coslet of Box #6, Helena, Montana. Not much to it in more senses than one.

Now for the A-list, which is up to a swollen fourteen entries, the first of them from across the unfortified northern border. Maybe they made a mistake in dismantling the bastions. Let's take a look and see—

CANADIAN FANDOM, 9 MacLennan Avenue, Toronto 5, Ontario. Editor, Beak Taylor. Published bi-monthly. 5c per copy, 6 copies 25c.

Good stuff by Barbara Brovard and such familiars as Henry Elsner Jr. and Leslie A. Croutch. All in all a thick, well printed issue with excellent cover by someone named Frome. Fred Hurter Jr. is present in force with his highly localized accounts of Canadian fancapers. The boys and gals are doing all right with this one.

DREAM QUEST, 495 North Third Street, Banning, California. Editor, Don Wilson. Published irregularly, 10c per copy, 3 copies 25c, 6 copies 50c, 13 copies $1.00.

A new one and a heavyweight. Fortunately, in view of the horrendously poor quality of artwork, the first issue contains interesting philosophical ramblings by Jack Speer, amusing items by Joe Kennedy and Rick Sneary (dealing with the problems of cardzine readers and how to get the 1948 convention to San Francisco respectively), solid book reviews by Moskowitz, Swenson and Ackerman, some florid but effective verse by the Nuttall wench and a solid assortment of features. We look forward to seeing more of this one.

FANTASY ADVERTISER, 628 South Bixel Street, Los Angeles 14, California. Editor, Gus

True Picture-Stories of the World's Great Heroes in

REAL LIFE COMICS

Approved by Parents and Teachers

NOW ON SALE—10c AT ALL STANDS!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Willmorth. Published bi-monthly. 50c per annum.

The neatest swap-job ever put out in stf. Not only does it list about everything available for fans anywhere, but its market comments on pro-magazine and book publishing put it way up there. Format, cover and printing all rate AAA. A must for serious fandom.

FANTASY COMMENTATOR, 19 East 235th Street, New York 66, N.Y. Editor, Dr. A. Langley Searles. Published quarterly. 25c per copy, 5 copies $1.00.

Probably the best if the heaviest serious fanzine of them all. Searles contributes his usual thoughtful editorial, this time on fantasy anthologies, and Sam Moskowitz is in there with a complete synopsis and analysis of the late Stanley Weinbaum's unpublished novel, THE MAD BRAIN, as well as the 8th installment of his monumental history of stfandom, THE IMMORTAL STORM. Also present is Henry Kuttner, Thyril Ladd and, with a poem, the late Abe Merritt. The book review department is well handled by Maynard Solomon, Richard Witter, John F. Burke and the editor . . . Searles, that is.

FANTASY REVIEW, 15 Shere Road, Ilford, Essex, England. Editor, Walter Gillings. Published bi-monthly. 15c per copy (post free). 75c per annum.

First important British postwar fanzine continues to rate top billing in the field. Moskowitz covers the American pro-zines adequately, as does Mr. Gillings. Nigel Lindsay blasts the Shaver business and August Derleth talks entertainingly about himself and Arkham House. Most of the rest of the issue is composed of book reviews, the bulk of them of American origin. We look to this preoccupation with US stf to fade in the future as Britain gets under way with its own.

FANTASY-TIMES (August & September, 1947) 101-02 Northern Boulevard, Corona, New York. Editor, James V. Taurasi. Published monthly. 10c per copy. $1.00 per annum.

Sort of a grown-up cardzine with excellent topical features added—chatty and informative. The September edition, listed as the Sixth Anniversary Issue, contains complete schedules for the recent Philcon. Much club news and a serial review of pro-zines in 1946 liven up both issues.

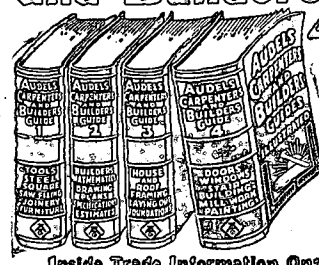
LUNACY, 1115 San Anselmo Avenue, San Anselmo, California. Editor, Jawge Caldwell, Published tri-monthly. 5c per copy.

A sudden upsurge in artwork quality, chiefly the cover by Gordon Cockroft, moved this perennial B-lister in the stratosphere. Caldwell, MacKinley, Rue Bowdoin and James Streiff contribute to a typical fanzine bit of juvenalia that somehow emerges, this time, as pretty good fun.

NECROMANCER, 877 North Third Street, Memphis, Tennessee. Editor, David A. Mac-

[*Turn page*]

AUDELS Carpenters and Builders Guides 4 vols. $6



Inside Trade Information for Carpenters, Builders, Joiners, Building Mechanics and all Woodworkers. These Guides give you the short-cut instructions that you want—including new methods, ideas, solutions, plans, systems and money saving suggestions. An easy progressive course for the apprentice and student. A practical daily helper and Quick Reference for the master worker. Carpenters everywhere are using these Guides as a Helping Hand to Easier Work, Better Work and Better Pay. To get this assistance for yourself, simply fill in and mail the FREE COUPON below.

Inside Trade Information On:

How to use the steel square—How to file and set saws—How to build furniture—How to use a mitre box—How to use the chalk line—How to use rules and scales—How to make joints—Carpenters arithmetic—Solving mensuration problems—Estimating strength of timbers—How to set girders and sills—How to frame houses and roofs—How to estimate costs—How to build houses, barns, garages, bungalows, etc.—How to read and draw plans—Drawing up specifications—How to excavate—How to use settings 12, 13 and 17 on the steel square—How to build hoists and scaffolds—skylights—How to build stairs—How to put on interior trim—How to hang doors—How to lath—lay floors—How to paint

AUDEL, Publishers, 49 W. 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.

Mail Audels Carpenters and Builders Guides, 4 vols., on 7 days free trial. If OK I will remit $1 in 7 days and $1 monthly until $6 is paid. Otherwise I will return them. No obligation unless I am satisfied.

Name_____

Address_____

Occupation_____

Employed by_____ PAF.

DETECTIVES

Home Study in Detective Training—Professionally Modernized—Recognized Instructors—Easy Payments—Write:
INTERNATIONAL DETECTIVE TRAINING SCHOOL
1701-T Monroe St., N. E. Washington 18, D. C.

STUN Your FRIENDS With GENUINE DIAMOND-LIKE ZIRCONS

Sparkling, "Brilliant-White" zircon gems, all sizes, from far-off Siam; cut, polished, mounted just like diamonds. You will be amazed at their diamond-like appearance—it's hard for even experts to tell the difference. Exquisitely smart settings 14K yellow or white gold—over a hundred gorgeous latest-style rings to choose from. Top quality. Attractive low prices. Send for FREE CATALOG. U. S. ZIRCON SYNDICATE
139 N. Clark St. Dept. ZC-18 Chicago 2, Ill.

TRAVEL for UNCLE SAM

RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS
$2,300 First year regular
MANY OTHER GOVERNMENT JOBS

Postoffice Clerks—Mail Carriers—Stenographers—Typists, Statistical Clerks, Storekeeper—Gaugers, etc. 32 Page Civil Service Book—FREE.
MEN — WOMEN
Veterans Get Preference
Mail Coupon immediately—today sure.

$1,756 to $3,021 FIRST YEAR

COUPON

FRANKLIN INST., Dept. P94, Rochester 4, N. Y.

Gentlemen: Rush to me, without charge, 32-page book with list of U. S. Government big paid positions. Advise me also regarding salaries, hours, work, vacation, etc. Tell me how to prepare for a position.

Name.....

Address.....*Vet?*.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!
Help Bring Crooks to Justice Through Scientific
CRIME DETECTION!
We have taught thousands this exciting, profitable, pleasant profession. Let us teach you in your own home. Learn Finger Printing, Firearms Indentification, Police Photography, Secret Service Methods thoroughly, quickly, at small cost. Over 800 of all American Bureaus of Identification employ I. A. S. students or graduates. We can prepare you for this fascinating work, during spare time. Write today, stating age, for "Blue Book of Crime."
INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE, 1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 7961, Chicago 40, Ill.

ANY BOOK IN PRINT
Delivered at your door. We pay postage. Standard authors, new books, popular editions, fiction, reference, medical, mechanical, children's books, etc. Guaranteed savings. Send for Clarkson's 1947 catalog.
FREE Write for our great illustrated book catalog. A short course in literature. The buying guide of 800,000 book lovers. The answer to your Christmas gift problem. Free if you write now—today!
CLARKSON PUBLISHING COMPANY
Dept. T-7, 1257 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

What Every Mason Wants
We have Important Masonic books for Blue Lodge, Chapter, Commandery, Scottish Rite, and Shrine.
OUR RITUALS ARE USED THE WORLD OVER
Send for free catalog of books and rituals for Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Knights of Columbus, etc.
EZRA A. COOK, Publisher, P.O. 796, GA, Chicago 90, Ill.

How to Make Money with Simple Cartoons
A book everyone who likes to draw should have. It is free; no obligation. Simply address
G.I. BILL APPROVED
CARTOONISTS' EXCHANGE
Dept. 71 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

WHY WEAR DIAMONDS
When dazzling Zircons from the mines of far-away mystic East are so effective and inexpensive! Thrilling beauty, stand acid, true backs! Exquisite mountings. See before you buy. Write for FREE catalogue.
Address: National Jewelry Company Dept. 5-A Wheeling, W. Va.
Catalog FREE!

FIGHT TUBERCULOSIS!

BUY CHRISTMAS SEALS!

Read STARTLING STORIES Every Issue!

Innes. Published irregularly. 10c per copy. 6 copies 50c.

A newcomer from the South and a promising one. Some of the by-lines are wince-making, but the editors and their gang have apparently contributed a sincere attempt to put out a first-line fanzine—which they have just about succeeded in doing. If the book reviews exceed the fiction, well, they aren't the only ones faced with such a dilemma. Printing, format, etc., are uniformly excellent.

ROCKETS, 469 Duane Street, Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Editor, R. L. Farnsworth. Published quarterly at $4.00 per annum.

Despite an unsigned effort to hint that the Moon was atom-bombed in some Atlantean or interspatial conflict, this magazine continues to hit its high standard of interest for rocketeers. George M. Sheahan Jr.'s lead letter on extra-tellurian life forms, while not strictly rocket stuff, is the most interesting item in the current issue.

SUN SPOTS, 9 Bogert Place, Westwood, New Jersey. Editor, Gerry de la Ree. Published irregularly. No price listed.

This veteran fanzine remains in its usual intelligent form. This issue is notable for news and comment on the Philcon, to say nothing of the 1947 Beowulf poll. Winning authors this year were A. E. Van Vogt, H. P. Lovecraft and A. Merritt (tied), H. G. Wells and Stanley Weinbaum (tied), Robert S. Heinlein and Henry Kuttner (tied), John S. Campbell Jr., L. Sprague de Camp and Dr. E. E. Smith in that order. There seem to be a lot of dead heats as well as dead authors in the poll.

THE GORGON, 4836 Grove Street, Denver 11, Colorado. Editor, Stanley Mullen. Published bi-monthly. 15c per copy. 75c per annum.

Third issue of what is probably the most impressive of all fanzines keeps well up to earlier standards. C. R. Bunnell, Nowell Chase, Ben Singer, Landell Bartlett, Phil Rasch, Sophia Magafan and the editor contribute a nicely balanced combination of amateur and professional scrivening. And Mullen's artwork is light years ahead of the rest of the crop. Keep it up out there.

THE KAY-MAR TRADER, Moorhead, Minnesota, Editor, K. Martin Carlson. Published monthly. 5c per copy.

Swap stuff which doesn't rate within miles of FANTASY ADVERTISER, but which fulfills its purpose for all that. Artwork could stand a pickup.

VOM, Box #6151, Met Station, Los Angeles 55, California. Editor, Forrest J. Ackerman. 50th and final issue. No price listed.

An unexpected reincarnation, long since thought buried. Apparently the Ack decided a letter from *Anglofan William F. Temple simply had to be printed* and wrapped a brief fanzine around it. Nice to see VOM again, even if this is a final appearance. Maybe it will do a Sarah Bernhardt and make more of same.

And now for the B's, also present in numbers if not great force. Increase in coverless publications is notable and, in all probability, a relief. With which, let's get at them. . . .

ASTRA'S TOWER, R.F.D. #1, East Greenbush, New York. Editor, Marion E. Zimmer. Published monthly. 10c per copy. 3 copies 25c. Book reviews, poetry, fantasy-foolery and the like commingled in a poorly hecktoed job. Hope Mr. Zimmer can make himself and his contributors clearer in his next.

BEMBOOK, 113 North Porter, Saginaw, Michigan. Editors, Bill Groover & Art Rapp. Published irregularly. 15c per copy. Michigan fans cut up some capers which follow the early fanzines of every other group in pattern. When they're a bit more vintage perhaps they'll do it better.

CARTOUCHE R.P.R., 4 Winship Avenue, San Anselmo, California. Editors, John and Gordon Cockroft and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jawge Caldwell. Published irregularly. No price listed. The trio above-listed have turned loose in behalf of Roger P. Rehm. If you know Roger's stuff, you won't be surprised. If you don't, you probably still won't be.

DIAGRAM, 211 Manley, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Editor, Fred Ross Burgess. Published irregularly. No price listed. Sheer madness. We couldn't tell one end from the other so how could we even start it, much less know when we were finished?

PSFS NEWS, 1366 East Columbia Avenue, Philadelphia 25, Pennsylvania. Editors. Robert A. Madle & Jack Agnew. Published bi-weekly. 5c per copy. 6 copies 25c. The official news-zine of the Philadelphia boys, all very much and rightfully agog over their Thing.

PORTLAND SCIENCE-FANTASY SOCIETY NEWS BULLETIN, 3435 NE 38th Avenue, Portland 13, Oregon. No editor listed. Published monthly. No price listed. Local fan gossip put out by the society members. Okay as such.

SINE NOMEN, 902 North Downey Avenue, California. Editor, John Van Couvering. Published irregularly. 5c per copy. In spite of an unexpectedly effective hunk of art (?) about two-thirds of the way through, this remains a job for the kiddies. With Norm Storer, John Cockroft and Telis Streiff in there striving, you get a few laughs and more frequent shudders.

SPACEWARP (Nos. 4 & 5), 2120 Bay Street, Saginaw, Michigan. Editor, Arthur H. Rapp. Published monthly. 10c per copy. Bill Groover, Wilkie Connor, Donn Brazier, Guerry Brown, Jack Clements, Hugh MacInnis, Bob Paris and Bob Stein, to say nothing of poetess Rue Bowdoin, contribute to this pleasant little magazine. Just a little more slickness in get-up would put this well up on the A-list.

THE BURROUGHS BULLETIN, Box 378, Manito, Illinois. Editors, V. & D. Coriell. Published monthly. Free of charge. In the second issue of this little job devoted to the creator of Tarzan and John Carter (or was it Carstairs? We never can remember and don't intend to look it up). Tigrina of the Ackerman Tigrinas comes up with the most completely naive interview we have ever read. Its subject? One guess should be sufficient.

THE ROCKET NEWS LETTER, 91 Pine Street, Riverside, Illinois. Editors, Wayne Proell & George Whittington. Published monthly. 10c per copy. $1.00 per annum. Good newsy stuff for the rocketfans who seem to swarm around Chicago. Most interesting item in issues 8 & 9 was Vincent Story's article on BIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF A SPACE JOURNEY in the latter.

TYMPANY (Nos. 9, 10 & 11), 514 West Vienna Avenue, Milwaukee 12, Wisconsin. Editors, Robert L. Stein & Redd Boggs. Published bi-weekly. 5c per copy, 6 copies 25c, 12 copies 50c. Currently far and away the best news-zine in the field. A good job whose quality is being well maintained.

And that brings us to the end of a husky department. We shall now begin assembling the fanzines for our next as you send them in. We're all for them in spite of occasional censure. Most of them are stimulating and amusing throughout. So please keep them coming to THE EDITOR, Suite 1400, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

Thanks and so long for now.

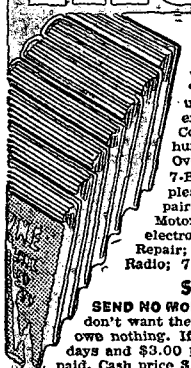
—THE EDITOR.

ENTERTAINING PUZZLES OF EVERY VARIETY IN

POPULAR CROSSWORD PUZZLES

NOW ON SALE—15c AT ALL STANDS!

EARN MORE MONEY IN ELECTRICITY



Get the better jobs at bigger pay as Electrical Industry expands. 200,000 more men needed every year. Be ready with the knowledge from Coyne's new "Applied Practical Electricity" in 7 volumes. Written and approved by electrical experts for easy, quick understanding. Complete up-to-date, fully illustrated with hundreds of diagrams, circuits, other helps. Over 5,000 subjects.

7-Book Set includes: 1. Elementary Principles and Circuits, Household Appliance Repairs; 2. Wiring for Light & Power; 3. D.C. Motors & Controls; 4. A.C. Motors & Controls, electronics; 5. Armature & Stator Winding & Repair; 6. Refrigeration & Air Conditioning, Radio; 7. Automotive Diesel Battery.

Sent on 7-Day FREE TRIAL

SEND NO MONEY. Ask to see them at our risk. If you don't want them after 7 days, send them back and you owe nothing. If you keep the set, send $3.00 after 7 days and $3.00 per month until $21.00 plus postage is paid. Cash price $19.75. 1 year Free Consultation Service and Bulletins included. Extra! Book of 150 Shop Prints absolutely FREE if you act promptly. Send your name and address on post card for 7-DAY FREE Examination and FREE book. Act now!

B. W. COOKE, Pres., 500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 97-75, Chicago 12, Ill.

Watch the Smoke Curl

Kentucky Tavern BARBECUE ASH TRAY

ALSO AN INCENSE BURNER! It's different! It's beautiful! It's useful... attractive for home and office. Handcolored to look like the real firestones. Smoke curls out the chimney. Holds generous supply of cigarettes and matches. Has metal fireplace grill cover which lifts out to remove ashes. Ideal gift. $1.98—includes a package of incense.

$1.98

SEND NO MONEY!

Rush this COUPON

ILLINOIS MERCHANDISE MART
Dept. 1475-A, 1227 LOYOLA AVENUE, CHICAGO 26, ILL.
☐ Rush Barbecue Ash Tray C.O.D. for $1.98 on money back guarantee.

NAME

ADDRESS

LAW

STUDY AT HOME for PERSONAL SUCCESS and LARGER EARNINGS. 39 years expert instruction—over 108,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All texts furnished. Easy payments. G.I. Approved. Send for FREE BOOK.
AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW
Dept. 84-T, 646 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill.

TOOTHACHE? DUE TO CAVITY

GET QUICK AMAZING RELIEF by placing Dent's Tooth Gum—or Drops—in cavity of aching tooth. Cavity toothache frequently strikes when you can't see dentist. Be prepared! Ask your druggist for either complete aid package. Follow directions.

25¢

DENT'S TOOTH GUM TOOTH DROPS

Free for Asthma

If you suffer with attacks of Asthma and choke and gasp for breath, if restful sleep is difficult because of the struggle to breathe, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Company for a FREE trial of the FRONTIER ASTHMA MEDICINE, a preparation for temporary symptomatic relief of paroxysms of Bronchial Asthma. No matter where you live or whether you have faith in any medicine under the sun, send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Caution! Use only as directed. Address

FRONTIER ASTHMA CO.
978-A FRONTIER BLDG.
462 NIAGARA STREET BUFFALO 1, N. Y.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHICH OF THESE *EXCITING* BOOKS DO YOU WANT?

ONLY 25¢ EACH

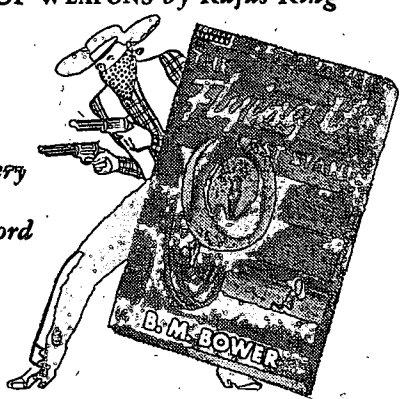
Now you can enjoy many hours of exciting reading pleasure at a small fraction of the original cost. The Popular Library reprints bring you word-for-word, page-for-page books of proved popularity in durable reprints. Take your choice of the titles listed below.

- ○ EVERY ONE A FULL-SIZED VOLUME!
- ○ EVERY ONE A FAMOUS BEST SELLER!
- ○ EVERY ONE ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AT $2 OR MORE PER COPY!

POPULAR LIBRARY *Mysteries*

- ○ 113 CRUCIBLE *by Ben Ames Williams*
- ○ 111 BEDELIA *by Vera Caspary*
- ○ 87 FATAL DESCENT *by John Rhode & Carter Dickson*
- ○ 63 SING A SONG OF HOMICIDE *by James R. Langham*
- ○ 65 THE WOMAN IN THE PICTURE *by John August*
- ○ 67 MURDER ON THE YACHT *by Rufus King*
- ○ 69 THE LISTENING HOUSE *by Mabel Seeley*
- ○ 98 DIVIDED ON DEATH *by Brett Halliday*
- ○ 97 A VARIETY OF WEAPONS *by Rufus King*

POPULAR LIBRARY *Westerns*



- ○ 119 FIREBRAND *by Tom Gill*
- ○ 103 THE PHANTOM CANOE *by William Byron Mowery*
- ○ 114 RAMROD *by Luke Short*
- ○ 104 MESQUITE JENKINS, TUMBLEWEED *by C. E. Mulford*
- ○ 118 THE FLYING U'S LAST STAND *by B. M. Bower*
- ○ 96 SINGING RIVER *by W. C. Tuttle*
- ○ 95 THE RED LAW *by Jackson Gregory*

POPULAR LIBRARY *Specials*

- ○ 102 DUEL IN THE SUN *by Niven Busch*
- ○ 110 CONGO SONG *by Stuart Cloete*
- ○ 94 THE MORTAL STORM *by Phyllis Bottome*
- ○ 115 POPULAR BOOK OF CARTOONS
- ○ 107 CROSSWORD PUZZLES
- ○ 91 THE SEA-HAWK *by Rafael Sabatini*
- ○ 101 LUMMOX *by Fannie Hurst*

ORDER BY NUMBER
MAIL COUPON TODAY!

POPULAR LIBRARY, INC., Dept. TFG-1
10 East 40th St., New York 16, N. Y.

Send me postpaid the Popular Library books I have circled. I enclose 25c (in coin or in U. S. stamps of small denominations) per copy (NOTE: We pay postage on orders for 4 books or more. If ordering less than 4 books, please enclose 5c per book extra for postage.)

87	95	98	103	63	111	115	91
96	101	104	65	113	118	94	97
108	107	110	114	119	67	69	

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY & ZONE..... ...STATE.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

KNOWLEDGE
THAT HAS
ENDURED WITH THE
PYRAMIDS

A SECRET METHOD
THE MASTERY OF

WHENCE came the knowledge that built the Pyramids and the mighty Temples of the Pharaohs? Civilization began in the Nile Valley centuries ago. Where did its first builders acquire their astounding wisdom that started man on his upward climb? Beginning with naught they overcame nature's forces and gave the world its first sciences and arts. Did their knowledge come from a race now submerged beneath the sea, or were they touched with Infinite inspiration? From what concealed source came the wisdom that produced such characters as Amenhotep IV, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and a host of others?

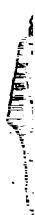
Today it is known that they discovered and learned to interpret certain *Secret Methods* for the development of their inner power of mind. They learned to command the inner forces within their own beings, and to master life. This secret art of living has been preserved and handed down throughout the ages. Today it is extended to those who dare to use its profound principles to meet and solve the problems of life in these complex times.

This Sealed Book—FREE

Has life brought you that personal satisfaction, the sense of achievement and happiness that you desire? If not, it is your duty to yourself to learn about this rational method of applying natural laws for the mastery of life. To the thoughtful person it is obvious that everyone cannot be entrusted with an intimate knowledge of the mysteries of life, for everyone is not capable of properly using it. But if you are one of those possessed of a true desire to forge ahead and wish to make use of the subtle influences of life, the Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) will send you A Sealed Book of explanation without obligation. This Sealed Book tells how you, in the privacy of your own home, without interference with your personal affairs or manner of living, may receive these secret teachings. Not weird or strange practices, but a rational application of the basic laws of life. Use the coupon, and obtain your complimentary copy.

The ROSICRUCIANS

SAN JOSE (AMORC) CALIFORNIA



AMENHOTEP
Founder of Egy
Mystery Scho

SCRIBE T. V. S.
The Rosicrucians (AM
San Jose, California

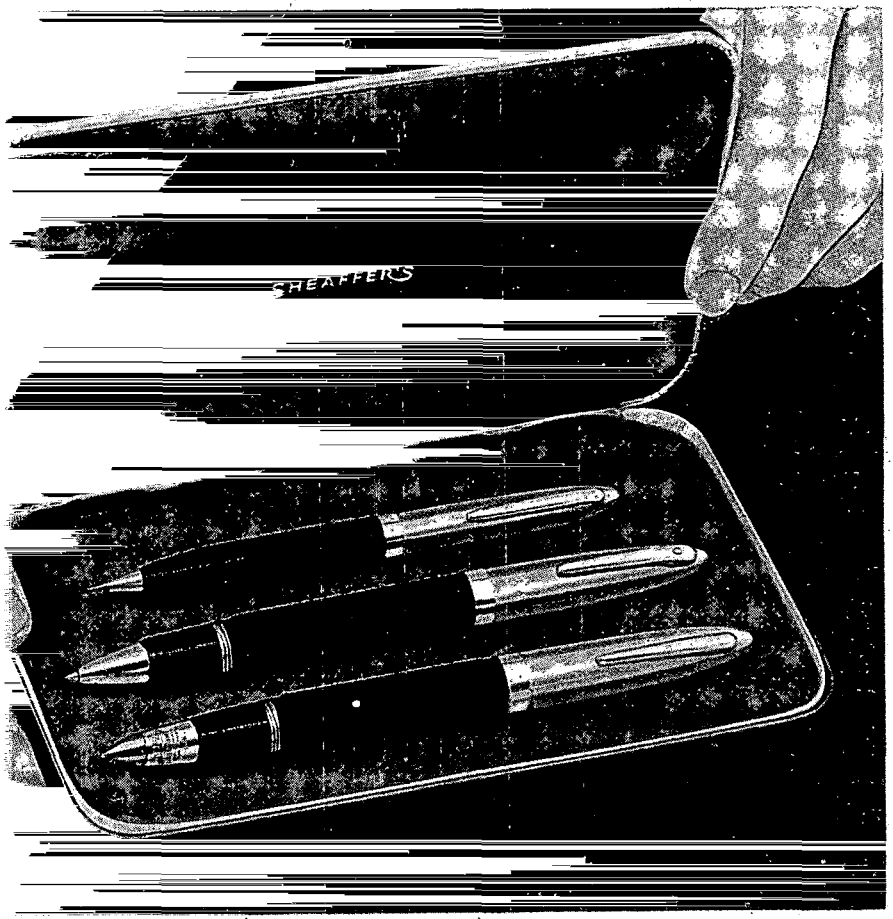
Please send free cop
which I shall read as

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



every writer's every written word!

ENTINEL *DeLuxe* THREESOME

'y complete writing ensemble—everything you'll ever need for *whatever, wherever,* ou write!

s celebrated *"TRIUMPH"* pen for character writing—for putting *you* on paper!

ıdable ball-tipped STRATOWRITER for quick notes and casual writing—for making for signing stencils, for addressing packages, for permanent red, blue or green n almost any surface.

affer's famous FINELINE pencil for all erasable writing—for figuring, sketching, moranda.

arate and distinct writing instruments—but only one quality, *top* quality, *Sheaffer's*

DE LUXE THREESOME—*"TRIUMPH"* PEN with 14-K gold point, $15; STRATOWRITER, $10· complete set, $30. No Federal Tax.

SHEAFFER'S

Copyright 1947, W. A. Sheaffer Pen Co.

EAFFER'S PARADE with Eddy Howard—*NBC Network*: 3 P.M. E.S.T.; 2 P.M. C.T.; 1 P.M. M.T.; 12 Noon P.T.
EAFFER'S ADVENTURERS CLUB—CBS Network: 11:30 A.M. E.S.T.; 10:30 A.M. C.T.; 9:30 A.M. M.T.; 8:30 A.M. P.T.

PROPERTY OF THE HOOVER CO.
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED